Cultural Exchange in Selected Contemporary British Novels

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Abstract

This thesis analyses representations of cultural exchange in contemporary British novels in the context of migration and the British literary field. It offers a multilayered approach: the combination of cultural exchange theory and its categories with narratological tools do justice to the aesthetic side of the novels as well as their socio-political and historical contexts that are particularly relevant for novels dealing with migration. Cultural exchange theory analyses appropriation and transformation processes, i.e. how the concepts, social or cultural practices as well as representations change when they are transferred into a different cultural context. Furthermore, this thesis takes into consideration that all novels exist as material objects within a literary field that is affected by editors, marketing people, reviewers, and other agents.

The results support the following theses: Contact and exchange are implicitly and explicitly depicted as something positive, with two of the novels emphasising the virtues of selective appropriation. However, the exchange processes mainly work in one direction only and contact between (British) Asian and (white) British characters is limited. The blame for this is often put on the immigrants and their families. The selected texts focus on obstacles and conflicts in exchange processes without offering solutions to the conflicts. In this context, religion or religious fervour along with a lack of education are most often depicted as the main obstacle for reciprocal cultural exchange.

The aesthetic means employed are analysed as well as their effects, e.g. whether form and content reinforce each other or produce contradictions. Finally, the thesis shows which novels deconstruct and contradict existing stereotypes and which ones are complicit in reproducing them.

Primary texts: Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006) and Maggie Gee's *The White Family* (2002).

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Abstract

In dieser Dissertation werden die Repräsentationen von Kulturtransfer in zeitgenössischen britischen Romanen untersucht (Monica Ali: *Brick Lane* (2003), Nadeem Aslam: *Maps For Lost Lovers* (2004), Gautam Malkani: *Londonstani* (2007) und Maggie Gee: *The White Family* (2002)). Für die Analyse der Begegnungen und Kulturtransferprozesse werden narratologische Analysekategorien mit denen der Kulturtransferanalyse verknüpft. Neben den textimmanenten Aspekten werden außerdem die Produktions- und Rezeptionskontexte der Romane mitberücksichtigt. Dazu gehören u.a. auch das Buchmarketing und Buchumschlagdesign sowie Rezensionen und öffentliche Reaktionen auf die Romane.

Mit diesem Instrumentarium werden z.B. folgende Fragen untersucht: Wie werden Begegnungen und Austauschprozesse repräsentiert und bewertet? Welche Gründe für Aneignung oder Abschottung werden formuliert? In diesem Kontext konzentriert sich die Arbeit auf die Repräsentation von Mediatorinnen und Mediatoren, Kontaktzonen und -situationen, Machtstrukturen sowie Selektions- und Ablehnungsprozesse. Außerdem wird untersucht, mit welchen ästhetischen Mitteln die Austauschprozesse gestaltet werden, beispielsweise durch die Untersuchung der *Plot*muster und der Charakterisierungen auf Stereotype hin. und welche Effekte dies bewirkt.

Die Analysen haben ergeben, dass Kulturtransfer als erstrebenswert bewertet wird. Gleichzeitig findet aber oft nur Assimilierung statt und kein reziproker Austausch auf Augenhöhe. Die ausgewählten Romane setzen sich vorwiegend mit Hindernissen des interkulturellen Austauschs auseinander. Besonders häufig werden in diesem Kontext Gründe wie mangelnde Bereitschaft, mangelnde Bildung und extremistische (religiöse) Ansichten der Einwandererfamilien angeführt. Die Romane verstetigen Stereotype, die dem Lesepublikum bereits aus vielen Massenmedien vertraut sind, u.a. durch entwicklungsresistente Charaktere, typisiert als ungebildete und unverbesserliche Migranten, die Parallelgesellschaften entwerfen.

Contents

1. Introduction

"This was England. If in doubt, keep them out."[1]

"This is England […] You can do whatever you like."[2]

These two quotations from Maggie Gee's novel *The White Family*, first published in 2002, and Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*, first published in 2003, show two contrasting assessments of England in the context of migration. In fact, a large number of contemporary British novels explore the question of what happens when people from different regions, religions, ethnicities, class backgrounds, age and gender groups live together in the UK. The term cultural exchange[3] is very useful to describe processes in this context, as it does not automatically imply hierarchies as other terms such as 'integration' do. While globalisation and migration are by no means new phenomena[4], the literary field in the 2000s saw a dominance of cultural productions that experimented with multi-cultural constellations or intercultural encounters, many of them focussing on British Asian and black British characters. The novel was the dominant form of this trend. Novels about migration and encounters between multiple cultures won the important literary prizes at that time and received much media attention. They were discussed widely, and some even created scandals.

Literature plays an important role in public discourse because it can reflect on the cultural, historical and political contexts of migration and its consequences. Literary representations are not limited to being comments on past events, they can also have an impact on the perception of the situations they represent to their audiences. As Stuart Hall claims: "[…] how things are represented and the 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a *constitutive*, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role."[5] Literature can contribute to discussions on multicultural[6] relations by creating representations and scenarios that investigate

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[1] Gee, Maggie. *The White Family*. London: Saqi, 2002. 31.
[2] Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane*. London: Black Swan, 2004. 491.
[3] For a more detailed explanation, see below.
[4] Cf. Osterhammel, Jürgen and Niels P. Petersson. *Geschichte der Globalisierung. Dimensionen, Prozesse, Epochen*. München: Beck, 2003.
[5] Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." 1989. *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Morley, David and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds). London: Routledge, 1996. 443 (emphasis in the original).
[6] I use the term 'multicultural' to refer to relations between people from different cultural and social backgrounds. For an explanation and critical review of the terms 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism' see Hesse, Barnor (ed.). *Un/settled Multiculturalisms. Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions*. London: Zed Books, 2000; Murphy, Michael. *Multiculturalism: A Critical*

different aspects and perspectives of those relations. Thus, literature can also represent conflicts from perspectives that are not dominant in public discourse. Furthermore, literary texts can even initiate debates or steer (the often heated) public debates on migration in a certain direction – given the right amount of attention. While on the one hand literature may have this kind of impact on society, the situation in contemporary Britain as well as the literary field in the UK can also have an influence on the production process and reception of novels on the other hand.

This thesis analyses representations of cultural exchange in contemporary British novels in the context of migration and the British literary field. It offers a multilayered approach: the combination of cultural exchange theory and its categories with narratological tools allows me to do justice to the aesthetic side of the novels as well as their socio-political and historical contexts that are particularly relevant for novels dealing with migration. Furthermore, my approach also takes into consideration that all novels exist as material objects within a literary field that is affected by editors, marketing people, reviewers, and other agents.

My choice of categories of analysis results from a dissatisfaction with academic approaches on offer for analyses of "multicultural novels", such as postcolonial literary criticism and its tools. I neither wholly reject postcolonial criticism – there are, in fact, shared interests between postcolonial theories and cultural exchange approaches – nor do I attempt to reinvent postcolonial studies. In particular, I take the works by those postcolonial sociologists and cultural theorists who are interested in the politics and conditions of postcolonial cultural production into account, such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, John Hutnyk and Dick Hebdige as well as the works by Bill Ashcroft *et al.*[7]. I will show how the tools cultural exchange theory provides offer a systematic approach and fine-tuned categories of analysis to examine cultural (ex)change processes in contemporary Britain and its critical assessment in literature (for a detailed positioning, see 2.2).

Cultural exchange theory, as developed in the 1980s by academics such as the historians Michel Espagne and Michael Werner[8], analyses the creative appropriation

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Introduction. London: Routledge, 2012; Modood, Tariq. *Multiculturalism. A Civic Idea*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

[7] Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (New Accents)*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2002.

[8] Cf. Espagne, Michel and Michael Werner. "Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S." *Francia* 13 (1985). 502-510.

of aspects of culture[9] between the members of two or more cultures and how the concepts, artefacts, ideas, institutions or representations change when they are transferred into a different cultural context. Cultural exchange theory covers the exchange *of* culture as well as exchange *between* cultures.[10] It focuses on the process instead of comparing supposedly static entities. And it examines not only the perspective of the migrants or their descendants, but also what effect migration has on the British in this case. In *Londonstani*, readers are confronted with a white protagonist who pretends to be British Asian to improve his social status. The protagonist Jas tries very hard to emulate his chosen subculture's language, style and attitude in order to pass as an 'authentic rudeboy' (cf. *Londonstani*: 9, 45, 57). *Londonstani* mocks the obsession with 'authenticity' that can be observed in public discourse and marketing – and implies that there is no such thing.

Out of my unease with approaches that either focus too much on the aesthetic side and neglect the political side of representations or overemphasize a potential socio-political impact and neglect the formal aspects, I combine cultural exchange theory with narratological tools and elements from literary field theory (see also 2.3 and 3.3). Literary field theory as developed by Pierre Bourdieu[11] is helpful in this context. Bourdieu examines "how aesthetic objects are embedded in processes of power formation and social hierarchies."[12] He calls for an analysis of the institutions and power relations in the literary field as well as internal and external hierarchies.[13] In addition to Bourdieu, the works of critics such as John Hutnyk, Virinder Kalra, Raminder Kaur, Graham Huggan and Anamik Saha on commodification are particularly interesting and valuable for an analysis of the contexts of novels representing cultural exchange.[14] In combination, these approaches, which I use for the analysis of the primary texts in this thesis, are more fine-tuned and provide a different set of categories and tools, compared to postcolonial approaches.

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[9] For a more detailed definition, please see section 2.1.
[10] Cf. Stedman, Gesa. "Introduction: Cultural Exchange: A New Research Paradigm for English Studies." *European Journal of English Studies* 10.3 (2006). 220f.
[11] Bourdieu, Pierre. *Les Règles de l'Art. Genèse et Structure du Champ Littéraire*. Paris: Seuil, 1992.
[12] Dörner, Andreas and Ludgera Vogt. *Literatursoziologie. Literatur, Gesellschaft, Politische Kultur*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994. 131f. [my translation, S.v.L.]
[13] Cf. Bourdieu 1992: 344f.
[14] See e.g. Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001; Hutnyk, John. *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry*. London: Pluto Press, 2000; Kalra, Virinder S., Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk. *Diaspora & Hybridity*. London: SAGE, 2005; Saha, Anamik. "The Postcolonial Cultural Economy: The Politics of British Asian Cultural Production." Dissertation. Goldsmith College, University of London, 2009.

I decided to concentrate on South Asian and British Asian characters in order to limit the analysis to one major shared cultural, historical and geographical context. Even though Asians in Britain and British Asians are by no means a homogenous group, they still share a lot of cultural practices and sadly also a particular experience of racism in Britain.

The terms 'Asian' and 'British Asian' are contested and cannot be used uncritically, as there is a "danger … of slipping into an essentialism that reifies the racial and ethnic categories" that many social scientists, in particular in the postcolonial field, rightly reject.[15] However, for want of a better, unproblematic term, I follow Saha and Watson and use the terms 'Asian' and 'British Asian' "for pragmatic reasons alone (and in a strictly anti-essentialist sense), to describe a diverse and constantly evolving set of overlapping communities, but nonetheless defined by the shared experience of racism and (post-)colonial histories."[16]

I chose novels with South Asian and British South Asian *characters*. Even though it was not a selection criterion, these novels were written by authors with the same background as their characters. Authors from different ethnic contexts might refrain from writing about British Asian characters because of the problematic and limiting discussions about 'authenticity' and the 'right to represent' certain communities.

The focus on South Asian and British South Asian characters ruled out the works by Afro-Caribbean and Black British authors such as Andrea Levy, Bernardine Evaristo, Caryl Phillips and Zadie Smith. The same goes for Leila Aboulela who has written about Sudanese Muslim migrants in the UK.

I chose novels published roughly between 2003 and 2007. The beginning of this period is marked by the publication of *Brick Lane*, a starting point of popular mass-market British-Asian novels in the aftermath of Zadie Smith's success with *White Teeth*. After 2007 I observed a shift of interest in the literary field in the UK: around this time, there seems to have been less interest in novels on British, Asian and British Asian interaction in the UK. Instead, there seems to be an increased interest in novels set in Britain after WWII (with fewer immigrant characters), set somewhere else altogether, such as the 2008 Booker Prize winner *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, or historical novels such as *Woolf Hall* and *Bring Up The Bodies*

[15] Watson, Sophie and Anamik Saha. "Suburban Drifts: Mundane Multiculturalism in Outer London." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2012). 6.
[16] Watson *et al.* 2012: 7.

by Hilary Mantel, the 2009 and 2012 Booker Prize winners. Also, among the prize winners then were many already established British authors such as Howard Jacobson (Booker Prize in 2010), Julian Barnes (Booker Prize in 2011). I suspect that the difficult economic situation since the global financial crisis as well as a still prevailing fear of terrorist attacks has contributed to a shift of focus onto the past.

I also included *The White Family* by Maggie Gee in the analysis. This novel has strictly speaking a different ethnic stock of characters compared to the other three. However, I wanted to include a novel that deals with the reactions of white British characters to migration, and there was nothing closer to the cultural and ethnic environment of the other selected novels than *The White Family*. In a way, the discrimination the Afro-Caribbean and African characters experience in Maggie Gee's novel is also based on their skin colour. In addition, the connections between the Caribbean and the UK are also affected by their shared colonial history, similar to the Indian Subcontinent.

I chose the UK as the main setting, ruling out authors like Kamila Shamsie whose *Broken Verses* (2005) is set in Karachi and *Burnt Shadows* (2009) in Japan, the USA and the Indian Subcontinent. The selection also excludes Salman Rushdie, whose *Shalimar The Clown* (2005) is set in the USA and *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) in India and Florence, in a completely different time. Hanif Kureishi's only novel in that period, *Something to Tell You* (2008), does not involve British-Asian characters to the extent that a cultural exchange analysis would have made sense.

The primary texts which are examined in detail are: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (2003), Nadeem Aslam, *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004), Gautam Malkani, *Londonstani* (2006) and Maggie Gee, *The White Family* (2002). These novels explore reasons and consequences of the meeting of different cultures and treat the topics of opportunities, conflicts, motivations and barriers of cultural exchange as well as the attempt to come to terms with a dynamic, ever-changing society. They offer many different perspectives and ways to deal with a "multicultural society" and with cultural exchange. All four novels were critically acclaimed and recognized by important literary prizes, such as the Booker Prize, the Orange Prize and the British Book Awards, which ensures public recognition.[17] They have also aroused controversies. In addition, most of them challenge the reader in aesthetic terms,

[17] *Brick Lane* was even adapted for the screen in 2007. The film was directed by Sarah Gavron.

although some do so more than others. Despite the critical acclaim, some novels such as *Maps for Lost Lovers* and *Brick Lane* show signs of stereotypical representations of British Asian characters, in particular religious ones.

The characters in these novels are primarily South Asian or British Asian, with family ties to Pakistan in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, Bangladesh in *Brick Lane* and India in *Londonstani*, and the setting is mostly London. The political and social events in the migrants' home countries have consequences for their lives in the UK. London is the most frequently chosen setting of many contemporary British Asian novels, surely because of its history as a destination for migrants, its symbolic power as the former centre of the British Empire and its current multicultural demographics[18]. Furthermore, the focus on religion and more specifically on Muslim practices and ideologies is particularly relevant in contemporary social debates, not only but even more so since the terrorist attacks on 9 September 2001 in New York (9/11) and 7 July 2005 in London (7/7). An analysis of the representations of conflicts between Muslims and non-Muslims is particularly interesting and contrary to my expectations[19], the novels did not necessarily contribute to a more balanced or heterogeneous image of Muslims in Britain.

The novels often focus on the so-called second generation[20], but not exclusively. Family constellations and conflicts between generations are in fact popular elements used in the selected novels. *The White Family* is to some extent an exception as the characters are not from the Indian Subcontinent. The analysis of

[18] "The non-White population of the UK is concentrated in the large urban centres. Nearly half (45 per cent) lived in the London region in 2001, where they comprised 29 per cent of all residents." (Office for National Statistics. "Focus on Ethnicity and Identity." March 2005. 3. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ethnicity/focus-on-ethnicity-and-identity/index.html (accessed 3 October 2012).) 54 per cent of the Bangladeshis and 19 per cent of the Pakistanis living in the UK reside in London (cf. ibid.). These numbers have not changed substantially in the 2011 census (cf. Office for National Statistics. "2011 Census: Key Statistics for England and Wales, March 2011." 11 December 2012. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/stb-2011-census-key-statistics-for-england-and-wales.html (accessed 20 June 2013).).

[19] Representations of Muslims in the (tabloid) press and even political and public discourse are often biased, limited to stereotypes and dominated by generalizations. Male Muslims are often depicted as violent Islamist fanatics and female Muslims as oppressed victims. I expected that critically acclaimed novels would aim to attack and dismantle these representations, offer differentiated, alternative representations and paint a more heterogeneous picture – similar to how writers such as Hanif Kureishi have challenged stereotypical representations of British Asians in their novels and other literary texts in the past.

[20] The term "second generation immigrants" is problematic. It refers to people born in the UK as immigrants, when they are not. This term perpetuates a distinction that expresses difference (and not in a positive way) and denies those described by the term a sense of belonging to a certain extent. For want of a better term to express that these people are raised in a cultural context that might be different from the context and practices of their parents, and because it surprisingly appears to be widely used and accepted, I also employ it at times.

Maggie Gee's novel shows that the approach this thesis can also be used outside of British Asian contexts. In addition – and more importantly – *The White Family* represents a number of white British perspectives with regard to migration. It is one of the very few representations of this kind. *The White Family* thus serves as a counterpoint and comparison to the other three novels.

In my analysis of the novels, I discuss questions such as: what plots or representations do these novels create? Which specific problems do they address and do they also offer solutions? In addition, the representation of cultural exchange and the effect of such representations will be scrutinized. In this context, I focus mainly on representations of cultural exchange elements, such as mediators, contact situations, power relations as well as selection and rejection processes. The results support the following theses: Contact and exchange are implicitly and explicitly depicted as something positive, with two of the novels emphasising the virtues of selective appropriation. However, the exchange processes mainly work in one direction only and contact situations are rare. There are only very few contact zones, and there is only limited contact between (British) Asian and (white) British characters. The blame for this is astonishingly often put on the immigrants and their families. The selected texts focus on obstacles and conflicts in exchange processes without offering solutions to the conflicts. In this context, religion or religious fervour along with a lack of education are most often depicted as the main obstacle for reciprocal cultural exchange.

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, the aesthetic means employed are analysed as well as their effects. Some of the most important categories in this context are characterisation techniques and narrative transmission as well as sympathy steering, the juxtaposition of multiple perspectives and the use of dramatic irony. One example for a question related to the effect of such aesthetic choices is the question of whether the use of multiple perspectives in the respective case leads to a multifaceted representation or whether it does not change anything with regard to stereotypical accounts. The analyses reveal that the use of multiple perspectives in the novels does not lead to more balanced or heterogeneous representations.

On a different level, I will look for patterns in plot lines and aesthetic means. The use of multiple perspectives and family constellations as well as an exploration of the connection between ethnicity and class status are recurrent elements. Many novels, the four discussed in detail as well as others published in the 2000s, have a

happy end with the birth of a baby as a sign of optimism and hope. All four primary texts play with reader preconceptions. One popular twist in this context is to introduce some characters as unlikable, racist, unfair to their fellow humans and then describe the hardship they had to endure themselves – such as prosecution and discrimination – to encourage the reader to feel sympathy (alternatively: pity) for this character and adjust their judgement. In this context, I discuss whether form and content reinforce each other or whether aesthetic means and plot lines work in different directions and produce contradictions. In *The White Family*, for example, the complexity of the represented encounters corresponds to the complexity on the aesthetic level. In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, however, the cultural exchange that is visible on the aesthetic level forms a contrast to the lack of exchange on the story level.

Finally, I show which novels deconstruct and contradict existing stereotypes and which ones are complicit in reproducing them – an allegation often voiced in the context of the commercial success of the novels. Another expectation concerning novels on migration could not be entirely confirmed, namely that there is a correlation between the popularity or success (either economically or in terms of prizes and reviews) and optimistic plots, a straightforward style and likable characters (i.e. novels that are easy and pleasant to read).[21] However, the histories of production and reception of the novels illustrate that difficult texts, e.g. novels that explore topics that make the mainly white middle-class audience uncomfortable, such as white middle-class racism, or novels that do not fit any current trend, face difficult times indeed in an environment in which every book is expected to make a profit. Furthermore, the material side of the novels, in particular what is done in terms of book marketing, can influence how a novel is perceived – not always to the novel's benefit and not always doing justice to the text, as the analyses will show. In fact, the content of the novels does not necessarily correspond with their packaging or advertisement: while the majority of the selected novels contain criticism of commodification on the subplot level, the paratexts are nevertheless often complicit in processes of commodification.

The following chapter, chapter 2, explains the key concepts of cultural exchange theory. In this context, I discuss the benefits of a combined approach that draws on

[21] While some novels were surprisingly complex or ambivalent at a second glance, others were discovered not to be as differentiated as expected at a closer look.

thoughts, tools and categories from cultural exchange theory as well as from narratology, postcolonial studies and literary sociology.

In chapter 3, the two most relevant contexts for the chosen novels are explained. The first part refers to the contacts and migration events between the Indian Subcontinent and the UK as well as the reactions to this transfer of people, because they are explicitly referred to in the novels. The second part focuses on the British literary field in order to explain the interplay between contemporary novels and their contexts of production and reception. The subtitle "Happy Multicultural Land" refers to a quotation by Zadie Smith[22] that has been picked up by critics and people in marketing alike to refer to a bandwagon effect of publications that represent an optimistic view of multicultural constellations.

Subsequently, in chapter 4, the four selected novels are analysed one by one. I rejected a structure based on the categories of analysis instead of the novels because the novels have rather different key aspects and use different kinds of aesthetic means to different ends, so that a uniform structure for all novels would not have worked very well. Also, I wanted to leave the novels intact to be able to better evaluate the effect of their strategies and means of representation. The categories of these analyses vary slightly according to what the novels demanded. I added subsections where appropriate, such as in the case of *Maps for Lost Lovers* which demanded a closer look at the use of metaphors.

In chapter 4, I identify which means of representation the novels apply and to what end. I analyse how the novels and their characters are constructed, and how cultural exchange is represented. In *Brick Lane*, the representation of contact zones as well as characterisation techniques and narrative transmission are the main focus. As the subheading suggests, cultural exchange – even to the extent of partial assimilation – is represented as something positive and desirable, something that eventually leads to the protagonist's happiness.

In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, the emphasis is on the representation of religion as an obstacle to exchange processes. Exchange is hereby valued as positive, whereas one-way transfer is criticised through the characterisation and juxtaposition of the main characters. Furthermore, the novel's use of metaphors and intertextual references deserve its own subsection.

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[22] Charters, Mallay. "A Budding Crop of First Fiction." *Publishers Weekly* 246.2 (2000). http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/print/20000110/26629-pw-a-budding-crop-of-first-fiction-.html (accessed 30 August 2012).

In addition to *Londonstani*'s manipulation of reader expectations, the selective appropriation of elements from British, U.S. American, Pakistani, Indian and other cultures are explained in detail. This section focuses on the representation of the desi rudeboy subculture with its rules, decisions about appropriation and rejection as well as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

Finally, *The White Family* demands an analysis of narrative transmission and characterisation techniques, not least due to its many characters that serve as reflector figures. Maggie Gee explores racism in a white British (lower) middle-class environment and makes clear references to incidents such as the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. The novel serves as a stark reminder that cultural exchange does not necessarily take place whenever mediators of two or more different cultures meet, or indeed produce a creative recombination of practices, language or other cultural manifestations.

After the detailed analyses of the four primary texts, the final chapter compares plot patterns, means of representation and formal innovations to show what elements are shared by the novels and what the effects of these choices and patterns are. One shared characteristic is that reciprocal exchange processes in the novels are evaluated as something more positive than single-sided transfers, but also rarer. And although the four main novels in this study received a lot of critical and media attention, their literary quality is often questionable: they are at times rather predictable, there is not a lot of room for reader participation and in many cases the novels reproduce problematic stereotypes.

This last section of my thesis explains whether the novels actually produce alternative representations of cultural exchange processes and so-called hyphenated identities or whether they mainly repeat already existing representations. Furthermore, this section summarizes relevant elements of the novels' history of production and reception. Has the "multicultural novel" trend continued? What did the hype about novels on migration and exchange in the UK do to the literary field and to the public or social debate? And finally, the last subchapter will provide an outlook onto new trends in the literary field and glance over novels that were written later by some of the main authors of the "multicultural novel".

The thesis thus combines cultural exchange theory and narratology with a context-oriented outlook. The model of textual analysis developed here may serve as a starting-point for further studies which focus either on other geographic relations,

e.g. Anglo-Caribbean or Anglo-Chinese cultural exchange, or which were written in earlier periods. The model is sufficiently open and flexible to be used productively in different contexts.

2. Cultural Exchange Theory, Postcolonial Theory, Narratology: Concepts and Categories of Analysis

2.1. Cultural Exchange Theory: Origins and Key Concepts

Cultural exchange theory analyses appropriation and transformation processes, i.e. how the concepts, artefacts, ideas, institutions, social or cultural practices as well as representations change when they are transferred into a different cultural context. This includes the exchange *of* culture, such as ideas, practices and institutions as well as the exchange between cultures.[23] I use a broad definition of culture which includes popular culture as well as so-called highbrow culture, material objects (e.g. books and clothes) as well as non-material ones (such as religious practices).[24] When Raymond Williams speaks of different understandings of "culture" and refers to "*material* production" as well as "*signifying or symbolic* systems"[25] to name the most prominent ones in cultural anthropology and cultural studies, he also claims that they are "to be related rather than contrasted"[26]. Williams also asks not to forget the conditions of production: "a culture is a whole way of life, and the arts are part of a social organisation which economic change clearly radically affects."[27]

As cultural exchange theory is interested in the process of the contact and transformation as well as individual mediators and institutions, the migration of people is also part of the investigation – this includes migration to a different country or region, but also social mobility. I would like to emphasize that the interest in transfer between cultures is not limited to national cultures but also includes subcultures and other groups that share e.g. value systems, conventions etc.[28]

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[23] Cf. Stedman, Gesa. "Introduction: Cultural Exchange: A New Research Paradigm for English Studies." *European Journal of English Studies* 10.3 (2006). 220f.
[24] Cf. Williams, Raymond. *Keywords*. 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
[25] Williams 1990: 91. (emphasis in the original).
[26] Ibid.
[27] Williams, Raymond. "Culture is Ordinary." 1958. *Cultural Theory. An Anthology*. Szeman, Imre and Timothy Kaposy (eds). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 55.
[28] If one speaks of the exchange between cultures, one runs the risk that essentialist notions of culture come in through the back door, e.g. if one attempts to define what culture A or culture B respectively is. This is problematic in many ways. Cultures cannot be neatly separated from each other because they are entangled. Katharina Scherke proposes to look at cultural exchange analyses as snap shots, not as completed terminated processes. (cf. Scherke, Katharina. "Kulturelle Transfers zwischen sozialen Gruppierungen." Ver-*rückte Kulturen*. Celestini, Federico and Helga Mitterbauer (eds). Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2003. 101.) In any case, one needs some kind of category to work with. As literary texts construct characters, relations and cultures themselves, it will be interesting to analyse how this is done and to what effect. In addition, cultural identities are only part of e.g. a mediator's identity and cultural exchange analyses can also focus on the object, idea etc. that is transferred and transformed, which may be more productive than attempts to define what a specific culture is or is not.

Cultural exchange theory was introduced by the historians Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, who were both working on Franco-German relations in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 1980s, they formulated their theory of cultural transfer, as they called it, as an answer to the criticism of historical comparisons.[29] Their aim was to shift the focus away from comparisons of allegedly stable, but indeed constructed, cultural or national entities to an analysis of exchange processes and the agents involved. So cultural exchange theory does not limit itself to registering the results of cultural exchange processes, but has a closer look at people and institutions involved as well as the transformation a good, idea, institution etc. might undergo during and after the process.

Many scholars, among them historians, ethnologists, sociologist and cultural studies scholars, have worked with and further refined cultural exchange theory. Among the historians are e.g. Rudolf Muhs, Johannes Paulmann and Willibald Steinmetz who worked in particular on Anglo-German transfer in the 19th century. Furthermore, they formulated categories that proved very useful for cultural exchange methodology[30], as I will explain below. Other historians who criticised and refined cultural transfer theory are Peter Burke[31], Hartmut Kaelble[32], Jürgen Schriewer and Hartmut Kaelble with their edited volume on comparison and transfer[33] as well as Johannes Paulmann[34]. The historian Matthias Middell and French Studies scholar Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink have worked mainly on transfer theory as well as transfer between Germany and France (and Canada), Dirk Hoerder on the history of migration and the mediators of cultural exchange.

Many texts deal with cultural exchange in the context of migration. Although it has often been criticised that many cultural transfer case studies concentrate on

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[29] Cf. Espagne, Michel and Michael Werner. "Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S." *Francia* 13 (1985). 502-510. See also: Espagne, Michel. "Sur les limites du comparatisme en histoire culturelle". *Genèses* 17 (1994). 112–121.

[30] Cf. Muhs, Rudolf, Johannes Paulmann and Willibald Steinmetz. "Brücken über den Kanal? Interkultureller Transfer zwischen Deutschland und Großbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert". Muhs, Rudolf, Johannes Paulmann and Willibald Steinmetz (eds). *Aneignung und Abwehr. Interkultureller Transfer zwischen Deutschland und Großbritannien im 19. Jahrhundert*. Bodenheim: Philo, 1998. 7-20.

[31] E.g. Burke, Peter. *Kultureller Austausch*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000.

[32] E.g. Kaelble, Hartmut. "Die Debatte über Vergleich und Transfer und was jetzt?" *H-Soz-u-Kult*. 8 February 2005. http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/id=574&type=artikel (accessed 11 January 2012).

[33] E.g. Schriewer, Jürgen and Hartmut Kaelble (eds). *Vergleich und Transfer. Komparatistik in den Sozial-, Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2003.

[34] E.g. Paulmann, Johannes. "Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer. Zwei Forschungsansätze zur europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts." *Historische Zeitschrift* 267 (1998). 649-685.

processes between only two nation states[35], the examples remain largely based on nation state-based bilateral transfers of goods and practices, with some trilateral exceptions.

In addition, cultural transfer theory has also been received by cultural studies scholars and used for interdisciplinary research, e.g. the transformation of goods, ideas, practices, institutions as well as representations of cultural transfer in written texts in the respective historical, social and cultural contexts. Gesa Stedman[36] has further refined the categories for a cultural exchange analysis, called for more attention to gender and emphasized the potential or need for more interdisciplinary approaches: "Cultural exchange studies provide an exciting new paradigm which aims at integrating many aspects that are all too often studied separately – for instance, within the subdisciplines of literature, linguistics, culture and pedagogy."[37] Jana Gohrisch has shown how cultural transfer theory and postcolonial studies can be linked, e.g. when analysing texts and contexts of Caribbean literature in English in the Caribbean and in the UK.[38] In addition, the research group "Moderne – Wien und Zentraleuropa um 1900" in Graz, Austria, attempted to bring together cultural transfer theory with cultural anthropology and postcolonial studies in order to deconstruct categories such as the nation state and look at dynamic, reciprocal exchange processes.[39]

The Swiss historian Urs Bitterli[40] uses an ethnological approach to look at encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans, in particular but not exclusively in the context of the 'discovery' of America. He emphasizes that those encounters can assume different forms and is particularly interested in resulting conflicts and xenophobia. He also investigates appropriation processes and emphasizes the transformation of goods, ideas, institutions etc.: "A component of one culture, by

[35] They thus focused on national culture as their central category.
[36] See in particular: Stedman 2006a: 217-230. See also Stedman, Gesa. "'Powders, Trimmings, and Curl'd Wigs' Gender and Cultural Exchange." *Journal for the Study of British Cultures* 13.1 (2006b). 63-78.
[37] Stedman 2006a: 222.
[38] Gohrisch, Jana. "Transatlantischer Kulturaustausch". Schmieder, Ulrike and Hans-Heinrich Nolte (eds). *Atlantik: Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte in der Neuzeit*. Wien: Promedia, Edition Weltregionen, 2010. 209-225. See also Gohrisch, Jana. "Cultural Exchange and the Representation of History in Postcolonial Literature." *European Journal of English Studies* 10.3 (2006). 231-247.
[39] Cf. Kokorz, Gregor and Helga Mitterbauer (eds). *Übergänge und Verflechtungen. Kulturelle Transfers in Europa.* Berlin: Peter Lang, 2004. See also Celestini, Federico and Helga Mitterbauer (eds). Ver-*rückte Kulturen. Zur Dynamik kultureller Transfers.* Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2003.
[40] See e.g. Bitterli, Urs. *Cultures in Conflict*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989.

being transmitted to another, changes its character, acquiring new functions and new meanings."[41]

Works on the history of migration[42] often work on case studies on e.g. Huguenots, Turkish guest workers in Germany and the so-called *Great Puritan Migration* to the USA. Raingard Esser sees a shift at the core of debates on migration and cultural transfer from an interest in the transfer of material culture towards such categories as perception, identity, self perception and social perception, i.e. perception by others[43]. Sociologists such as Katharina Scherke focus in their analyses of cultural exchange on the mediators, their social position as well as conditions of social segregation and mobility.[44]

Cultural exchange is a neutral term, i.e. cultural exchange as such is not a value in itself or something positive *per se*. On the contrary, conflicts that arise from encounters as well as blind spots in exchange or transfer processes are particularly highlighted in cultural exchange theory. Neither is cultural exchange something new; it can be observed in (intercultural) encounters of the past as well as the present.[45]

Exchange or transfer can be forced upon somebody (e.g. by colonial rule and assimilation pressure), but it can also happen voluntarily. It can happen consciously, with an intention in mind, but it can also happen unintentionally. An often cited example is the relationship between colonisers and colonised: the latter are forced to adapt to a different culture (forced transfer, intended by the aggressors). However, the appropriations were not always exact copies, but the meaning, use etc. was often changed; in addition, what is often seen as a one-way transfer from colonisers to colonised people is often rather an exchange: one can also observe change in the colonizers and their practices.[46] The tools and perspectives that come with cultural exchange theory offer a systematic way to analyse relations between cultures and appropriation processes in contemporary as well as historical contexts.

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[41] Bitterli 1989: 50.
[42] For an overview about what migration history has accomplished so far and which areas could be researched in more detail – and with more interdisciplinary approaches – read: Esser, Raingard. "Migrationsgeschichte und Kulturtransferforschung." *Das Eine Europa und die Vielfalt der Kulturen. Kulturtransfer in Europa 1500-1850*. Fuchs, Thomas and Sven Trakulhun (eds). Berlin: BWV, 2003. 69-82.
[43] Cf. Esser 2003: 79.
[44] Cf. Scherke 2003.
[45] For historical perspectives see e.g. Bitterli 1989. See also Osterhammel, Jürgen and Niels P. Petersson. *Geschichte der Globalisierung. Dimensionen, Prozesse, Epochen*. 2nd edition. München: Beck, 2003. See also Burke 2000.
[46] Cf. Bitterli 1989: 20.

As already mentioned, many scholars from different disciplines such as ethnology, cultural studies, history, sociology etc., have worked on phenomena of cultural exchange. However, in contrast to the approaches mentioned above, there are a number of scholars who work on similar processes but do not employ this particular term, i.e. cultural transfer or exchange. With reference to postcolonial theory, entangled history approaches aim to overcome national and eurocentristic historiography by having a closer look at how the histories of European and non-European cultures are entangled.[47] Cultural exchanges are part of their interest. However, their aim is not only to analyse the history of entanglements, but also to transform the idea of history towards history as entanglement.[48] *Histoire croisée* wants to move away from national histories, too, and attempts to use a minimum of two perspectives for an analysis as well as viewpoints from different time and space positions for a more differentiated picture.[49] Jürgen Osterhammel and Neils P. Petersson have worked on globalisation and migration processes and put them in a historical context[50], however without consciously applying categories as defined by cultural exchange theory. Hartmut Kaelble and Rudolf Muhs *et al.* give good overviews about the different disciplines and concepts of cultural transfer theory and related approaches.[51] Rudolf Muhs *et al.* also offer the most elaborate set of categories for a cultural exchange analysis, as will be discussed in the section below.

One of the main problems cultural exchange theory is confronted with is the large amount of terms that all seem to mean something similar, such as cultural transfer, translation, hybridization, cultural syncretism, métissage, creolization, etc. They differ in origin, discipline, definition and ideological implication. In addition, the majority of the texts on cultural exchange theory was only published in German and French – and thus only read by a small number of scholars. So while many scholars from many different disciplines all work on processes that can be called cultural exchange processes, the theory as developed by Michael Werner and Michel Espagne as well as the categories provided by Rudolf Muhs *et al.* were not widely

[47] Cf. Conrad, Sebastian and Shalini Randeria. "Einleitung. Geteilte Geschichten – Europa in einer postkolonialen Welt." *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*. Conrad, Sebastian and Shalini Randeria (eds). Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002. 10.
[48] Cf. Conrad *et al.* 2002: 17.
[49] Cf. Zimmermann, Michael and Bénédicte Zimmermann. "Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der *Histoire croisée* und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28.4 (2002). 607-363.
[50] Cf. Osterhammel *et al.* 2003.
[51] Cf. Kaelble 2005 as well as Muhs *et al.* 1998: 7-20. See Kaelble 2005 for an overview of cultural exchange theory and its critical reception.

received. Furthermore, Hartmut Kaelble and Peter Burke criticise that there was not enough dialogue with other people and disciplines, that there was not enough contact with Anglo-American scholars, that it would do the theory good to be tested on empirical evidence and that the technical terms should be agreed on to make cultural exchange theory more accessible (transfer, exchange or entanglement or the like).[52]

Exchange or Transfer?

Cultural exchange theory provides valuable tools and categories of analysis for my work with contemporary novels of migration – and the various relationships, conflicts, appropriation and mixing results that are represented in the novels which I analyse in this study. In some theory texts, the terms cultural transfer and cultural exchange are used interchangeably. In the following I will explain the choice of terminology, i.e. exchange or transfer. Both terms have their advantages and disadvantages. In my thesis, I will use the word cultural exchange, even if not every process I analyse leads to a reciprocal appropriation of ideas, practices, objects, etc.

I decided against the term 'cultural transfer' because it seems to imply a single-sidedness that is counterproductive. Furthermore, it might also give the impression that something travels from one location to a different one with an active agent and his/her intention and a regulated agenda behind the process of exchange in question – but this is not always the case, nor are there necessarily only two agents or cultures involved.

The term 'exchange', on the other hand, implies more of the dynamism I want to highlight, i.e. that ideas, goods, people etc. might travel back and forth and that not only one side is affected by the appropriation processes in question. Transfer in contrast sounds less dynamic. However, exchange does not imply the sort of exchange in which something is given in exchange for something else (such as in monetary exchange) or a total replacement of e.g. cultural practices.

Peter Burke speaks of different possible results, like a scale with two extreme poles such as complete segregation and homogenisation (sometimes also called 'Americanisation').[53] Urs Bitterli defined some stages of cultural encounters: contact, collision, relationship.

> History, of course, never reveals these basic types in a pure state. [...] Nor does any of these types lead necessarily to another. Contact between cultures

[52] Cf. Kaelble 2005. See also Burke 2000: 14ff.
[53] Cf. Burke 2000: in particular 24-40.

> may result in a relationship between them, but need not; a relationship can dwindle into mere contact; collision is not the inevitable outcome and need not mean the end of contact between cultures.[54]

Urs Bitterli came up with these types for pre-colonial encounters and stated that for contemporary encounters one should invent new types, such as "cultural intermingling"[55].

What I make of it is that there is a whole spectrum of possible processes and outcomes, from violent to peaceful encounters, from encounters with rejection of exchange to fully-fledged reciprocal exchange with appropriation processes – and cultural exchange theory allows me to analyse them all.

I chose cultural exchange in the sense of creative appropriation(s) that can potentially affect all agents involved as well as the objects, practices etc. that are transferred. And as cultural exchange processes can also lead to cultural change[56], potential and real effects need to be analysed. My use of the term 'cultural exchange' does not imply that processes have to be reciprocal or have to take place in a regulated kind of way. The encounters in the primary texts are in fact not all reciprocal 'happy multicultural' kinds of exchange. But even though the represented relations might qualify more for labels such as single-sided transfer or even rejection and creation of parallel societies, cultural exchange theory and its categories are still highly productive for an analysis, as my study shows.

Categories of Analysis

The historians Rudolf Muhs *et al.* refined the methodology of cultural exchange theory and demanded that scholars investigating cultural exchange processes ask questions about the way the contact between the parties is established as well as the sources, media, people, and institutions involved.[57] In addition, the change the transferred object undergoes, i.e. the appropriation or translation of the knowledge, good, practice, etc., needs to be analysed. Furthermore, they demand that the direction of transfer, time lags and blind spots be scrutinized. While I agree that the

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[54] Bitterli 1989: 20.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Cf. Stedman, Gesa and Margarete Zimmermann. "Kulturtransfer der Frühen Neuzeit unter dem Zeichen von Raum und Gender: eine Problemskizze." *Höfe – Salons – Akademien. Kulturtransfer und Gender im Europa der Frühen Neuzeit.* Stedman, Gesa and Margarete Zimmermann (eds). Hildesheim: Olms, 2007. 9. See also Joshua, Eleoma. "Introduction." *Cultural Exchange in German Literature*. Joshua, Eleoma and Robert Vilain (eds). Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007. 2.
[57] Cf. Muhs *et al.* 1998. The categories are further refined e.g. by Stedman 2006a: 217-230. See also Stedman *et al.* 2007: 1-17.

above-mentioned questions are important to cultural exchange analyses, I do not agree with the six segments of cultural transfer that Rudolf Muhs *et al.* have formulated and I will describe in the following what I took out of several cultural exchange approaches for my analysis and what I reject.

My first category of analysis refers to the contact situation, because contact of some kind is one of the prerequisites of cultural exchange. It is of course also quite interesting to see where there is no or only limited contact. To describe the contact situation, Mary Louise Pratt's term contact zone can be useful. She defines contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[58] The geographical contact zone in the primary texts for this thesis is mostly, but not exclusively, London. Institutions, e.g. schools, can serve as contact zones, but also families as meeting grounds for different generations, subcultures etc. Contact can be established through various situations, voluntary and conscious ones as well as coincidental contacts, peaceful ones and violent ones. Two of the main reasons for contact – in historical accounts of cultural exchange as well as representations of cultural exchange in novels – are migration (forced or voluntary, initiated by e.g. persecution, lack of jobs, the search for a better life) and imperialism. So cultural exchange can also be the long-term result of forced contact and conflict. The case of the exchange between the Caribbean and the UK shows that the consequences of the relations do not necessarily remain in the region where the contact was established (e.g. the Caribbean), but can also have effects on the region from which the cultural exchange emanated (i.e. the UK in this case).[59]

What interests me most is who meets where and when; and this is where historical and political contexts as well as class, gender, religion, age and ethnic differences can be productively analysed. The resulting power structures and their role for the exchange process will be analysed here and in another connected category: mediators.

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[58] Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone". *Profession* 91 (1991). 34. However, Pratt emphasized a one-way transfer from dominant to dominated culture: "While subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for. Transculturation, like autoethnography, is a phenomenon of the contact zone." (ibid.) I do not limit exchange to that. There might be some examples that fit Pratt's idea, but there will also be instances in which the supposedly inferior party resists the dominant one and re-appropriates something different than intended.

[59] Cf. Gohrisch 2010: 223f.

In terms of the contact situation, Rudolf Muhs *et al.* claim that there has to be a clear division between the (two) units involved in the exchange, such as a national border[60]. In many of their transfer analyses they work with national cultures in the 19th century and e.g. look at how what is perceived to be English culture changes when products or styles from France are 'imported' and appropriated. The use of 'national cultures' as categories is problematic. For a contemporary analysis, national categories might still play a role in specific contexts (e.g. if a character is portrayed to be very nationalistic), but they are not to be employed comprehensively. One has to be careful here not to become complicit in (re-)creating such essentialist categories. This point is closely linked to the following category, the mediators. While the national context may still play a role in particular cases of exchange, it may not be the only point of reference, nor may its constructedness remain uncommented.

The second important category which is related to the above is the category of the mediator. What is a mediator? It is somebody or something, e.g. an institution, who initiates cultural exchange processes, be it by bringing together people, or by transporting goods, or by introducing practices, institutions or representations to a new context. One could also argue that a text can be a mediator as it has the potential to establish a contact between different cultures (reader-characters, characters-characters) and by experimenting with different constellations.

Mediation can happen on purpose, but it can also happen unintentionally; mediators can even be forced agents in certain contexts. It is not even necessary that a mediator thinks of him- or herself as mediator. Status and power relations need to be included in this category as well. In addition, I want to have a closer look at obstacles and facilitators, i.e. people, institutions, or constellations that help/encourage or hinder cultural exchanges. In my primary texts, there is a significant number of characters who attempt to hinder cultural exchange processes. I will analyse the representation of the rationale or ideology behind these reactions of rejection as well as the effects this representation has for the text.

Katharina Scherke calls for more attention to the mediators' social position in order to make visible the conditions under which mediators engage in cultural exchange. Mediators are part of social groups which are characterised by differences

[60] Cf. Muhs *et al.* 1998: 18.

in their access to resources, their life-style and their ability to influence society – so social segregation and mobility should be analysed as well.[61]

For a person's or character's identity, many different aspects, such as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, appearance, style etc. play a role. Which of these aspects are more important than others depends on the context or the specific situation.[62] "People do not neatly fit into categories, as might be the case for flowers or plants."[63] In the case of an analysis in literary texts, which category or facet of the character's identity is more important than others for a specific cultural exchange process depends on the representation. There, one should distinguish between the character's own interpretation and an outside view, e.g. by the narrative instance or other characters. Of particular interest are conflicts or clashes, e.g. if the character sees herself as young, British and educated, but is only treated as black and marginal by others.

Further categories are the motivation for exchange or its rejection and the assessment of the cultural exchange processes. Rudolf Muhs *et al.* claim that there needs to be an intention behind any transfer process.[64] I disagree, as many examples collected by historians prove that exchange can very well happen without intention as well as without this being the free will of one or both sides involved[65].

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, I will look at the actual appropriation and change of the practice, good, idea, institution etc. How is the new element kept or integrated in the new context?[66] Furthermore, I will, where applicable, identify blind spots, i.e. what did not get exchanged or transferred.[67] Rudolf Muhs *et al.* refer to an act of reflecting on transfer processes from a distance in order to assess one's own image of 'the other' and e.g. adjust existing stereotypes, claiming that this practice might influence future exchange processes[68]. Such observations and assessments can also be found in literary texts, including the selected novels for this thesis, e.g. in the form of (often explicit) comments on

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[61] Cf. Scherke 2003: in particular 101-104.
[62] Cf. Kalra, Virinder S., Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk. *Diaspora & Hybridity*. London: SAGE, 2005. 5. The mediators' nationality is only one of many possible aspects of their identity that could play a role in a transfer process.
[63] Kalra *et al.* 2005: 28.
[64] Cf. Muhs *et al.* 1998: 18.
[65] Cf. e.g. Burke 2000: 13.
[66] Cf. Muhs *et al.* 1998: 18.
[67] E.g. in *The White Family*, the majority of cultural exchange processes happens with consumer products, not so much with practice or empathy.
[68] Cf. Muhs *et al.* 1998: 19. While Muhs *et al.* call this act "secondary observation" (ibid.), Gesa Stedman employs the more comprehensible term "reflection" (Stedman, Gesa. *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 13.).

exchange processes and value judgments. Such meta-level reflections will also be part of my analysis.

Rudolf Muhs *et al.* claim that the end of a transfer should be found in the integration of the formerly foreign element in the target culture. I do not think that defining a start and end of an exchange process is possible; in particular if one believes that everything is in constant flow and exchange anyway. I think it makes more sense to define a time frame or window to conduct the analysis and include the historical context[69]. Who could possibly say that an appropriated element is no longer seen as foreign? For cultural exchange processes in contemporary Britain, this understanding of a start and an end of exchange processes is not advisable. I also reject the notion of "successful transfer". What should a successful transfer consist of? An identical reproduction? Transfer or exchange rather than just contact without relation? I do not believe that this term is productive.[70]

To categorise what exactly is being transferred or exchanged, I modified some of David Horton's categories that he developed to problematise cultural transfer in literary translations.[71] This is to do justice to the fact that the (ex)change of a popular dish is not the same as a transfer or change of religious conventions. The four distinctions that are most relevant for the following analysis (to varying extent) are: the transfer of people, i.e. voluntary or forced migration, the exchange of consumer goods and services, the (ex)change of phenomena of social organisation and practice and finally the transfer or transformation of language.

Summing up, the most important categories are contact situation, mediators and power relations, the actual transformation or appropriation, and the assessment of the exchange. And as I am working on representations of cultural exchange in contemporary novels that have the potential to depict different perspectives on the same processes, an analysis of the different assessments in connection with the different characterisation techniques will be quite interesting.

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[69] Cf. also Scherke 2003: 101.

[70] If I speak of successful exchange, it does not refer to an absolutely identical copy, but the fact that any kind of transfer or exchange happened at all – in contrast to a total rejection.

[71] Horton, David. "Describing Intercultural Transfer in Literary Translation: Alice in 'Wunderland'". *Kultur und Übersetzung: methodologische Probleme des Kulturtransfers.* Thome, Gisela, Claudia Giehl and Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast (eds). Tübingen: Narr, 2002. 95-113.

2.2. Positioning: Cultural Exchange Theory in Relation to Other Theories and Approaches

Cultural exchange theory is by no means the only approach dealing with (ex)change and appropriation processes and their representation in forms of art. However, they do so under a variety of names and have different agendas. Some of the terms describing similar phenomena are syncretism[72], acculturation[73], métissage[74], and creolisation[75]. Among the most influential ones for literary analyses are the many postcolonial approaches which deal with novels and authors such as the ones analysed in this thesis. There are some points where cultural exchange and postcolonial theories or approaches can be connected, as the following passage will show.

At first glance, translation studies and cultural exchange theory seem to have common interests, e.g. how concepts, ideas, practices etc. 'travel' from one culture to another and how they might be 'translated' into the new context. This interest in transformation provides a point of connection to cultural exchange theory. However, in my primary texts, these kinds of 'translations' are not the main concern. What I found productive in some works on translations was the categorisation and segmentation of culture, as formulated e.g. by David Horton[76]. As explained in the section above, I apply some of David Horton's categories in order to be able to make a clearer difference between transformations that concern e.g. social practices from the ones concerning tangible goods.

A group of scholars who claim that there will be a so-called 'translational turn' do this on the basis of a broad understanding of 'translation'. Among them is Doris Bachmann-Medick, who acknowledges the metaphorical and linguistic dimensions of the term, but repeatedly points out that 'translation' as understood in

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[72] Syncretism describes exchange processes and transformations between religions and belief systems (cf. e.g. Bentley, Jerry. *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.).

[73] Urs Bitterli uses the term 'acculturation' in order to describe a relationship between cultures that is characterised by cultural change, which is in turn caused by intercultural contact (cf. Bitterli 1989: 49.). See also Stedman 2013: 15f.

[74] 'Métissage' is often used in the sense of cultural hybridisation. It is frequently employed in order to express that there are no 'pure' cultures. For critical discussions of the term métissage see Kandé, Sylvie (ed.). *Discours sur le Métissage, Identités Métisses: en Quête d'Ariel*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999.

[75] Creolisation is not limited to (socio)linguistic phenomena and creole languages. For a discussion of the concept of creolisation, as coined by Édouard Glissant, as well as new developments and the parallels to theories of cultural exchange, transformation and hybridity see Müller, Gesine and Natascha Ueckmann (eds). *Kreolisierung Revisited. Debatten um ein Weltweites Kulturkonzept*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2013.

[76] Cf. Horton 2002: 95-113.

the context of a translational turn is more complex than that.[77] In this particular context, the term 'translation' seems to serve as a metaphor for transformation processes within cultural exchange processes. Bachmann-Medick claims that the concept of 'translation' can be used for analyses of cross-cultural encounters, including the mediation process, political dimensions and power structures.[78] In order to contribute to the translational, Bachmann-Medick calls for interdisciplinary cooperation and case studies in order to develop a systematic methodology.[79] As long as there is no such systematic methodology, 'translation' risks remaining yet another metaphor for cultural exchange processes. Cultural exchange theory, on the other hand, is a more specific and a more developed concept which allows for an analysis of cultural encounters in Bachmann-Medick's sense. So far, I have not come across a systematic approach in the context of the translational turn that could help me refine my methodology.

Scholars working on novels which represent migration and the contact between different ethnicities in Britain have to face postcolonial studies, at least to some extent. Postcolonial studies come in many different forms and shapes and can have very different agendas, not least because of the variety of disciplines that contribute to postcolonial studies, such as ethnology, history, sociology, political and literary studies, to name just a few.[80] Scholars like Robert Young[81] aim to put postcolonial studies in context with a longer history of anti-colonial struggle.[82] Other scholars, such as Ashcroft *et al.*, highlight the political impact of postcolonial writing and are predominantly interested in forms of resistance against hegemonic discourses and representations[83]. A number of literary scholars, such as Roy Sommer[84], tend to

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[77] Cf. Bachmann-Medick, Doris. "Introduction: The translational turn." *Translation Studies* 2.1 (2009). 2-16.
[78] Cf. ibid.: 2 and 14.
[79] Cf. ibid.: 3f. and 14.
[80] For an overview of the development of postcolonial studies over time and for an overview of some of the uses in different disciplines see Bachmann-Medick, Doris. "Postcolonial Turn." *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006. 184-237. See also McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. 2nd edition. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. In particular: 7-43.
[81] One of the major contributions to the discussion is: Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism. An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
[82] Young wants to "reorient postcolonialism in terms of the Marxist-inspired political movements which challenged colonialism and Empire across the world" (McLeod 2010: 299) by connecting it "entirely to the long history of anti-colonial dissidence." (ibid.)
[83] See for example Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (New Accents)*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2002.
[84] See for example Sommer, Roy. *Fictions of Migration. Ein Beitrag zu Theorie und Gattungstypologie des zeitgenössischen interkulturellen Romans in Großbritannien*. Trier: WVT, 2001.

be more interested in genre and typologies than the political potential of postcolonial novels. Materialist critics, such as Benita Parry, aim to draw more attention to forms of resistance other than discourse[85] and claim that the "'culturalist' bias" of many postcolonial theories "severs the sphere of intellectual and cultural endeavour from the realm of direct action: resistance, movements, political dissidence, even armed struggle."[86] And while Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall are interested in strategies of resistance in cultural production as well as political activism, scholars like Graham Huggan highlight exoticist discourses and commodification processes in the field of cultural production.[87] Investigations into the political contexts and effects of cultural production are by no means limited to literature. One particularly productive field is the analysis of music and related practices, as done by scholars like John Hutnyk.[88]

The different types of postcolonial studies have some characteristics in common with cultural exchange theory, such as their interest in transformations and their aim to challenge and deconstruct (colonial and neo-colonial) narratives, categories and hierarchies. 'Postcolonial' has become an umbrella term, and while I do not attempt to reinvent postcolonial studies, I will explain how some of its concepts can be beneficially linked to cultural exchange theory. I will show how the tools cultural exchange theory provides might be able to resolve some of the criticism postcolonial approaches have had to face. I believe cultural exchange theory provides productive solutions and categories to tackle contemporary British novels that deal with migration, multicultural societies, cultural exchange processes and its obstacles.

Bill Ashcroft *et al.*, for example, have compiled and analysed postcolonial theories and practices that challenge dominant Western narratives and power relations by "writing back" and inscribing postcolonial experiences and formerly marginalised voices in the literary field.[89] This strategy, the appropriation and

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[85] For example in her critical contribution to the field: Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies. A Materialist Critique*. London: Routledge, 2004. Parry criticises, for example, that there is more talk about discursive violence than actual violence (cf. ibid.: 4).

[86] McLeod 2010: 293.

[87] For example in: Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.

[88] See for example Sharma, Sanjay, John Hutnyk and Ashwani Sharma (eds). *Dis-Orienting Rhythms: the Politics of the New Asian Dance Music. London:* Zed Books, 1996; Hutnyk, John. *Critique of Exotica: Music Politics and the Culture Industry.* London: Pluto Press, 2000; Hebdige, Dick. *Cut'n'Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*. London: Methuen, 1987.

[89] Cf. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989. They have also published a new edition in 2002, commenting on the development of postcolonial studies since its origins: Cf. Ashcroft *et al.* 2002.

transformation of (canonized) British literature such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in novels such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) by Jean Rhys and *Foe* (1986) by J.M. Coetzee respectively (to name just two of an immense number), shows parallels to cultural exchange processes: some of the texts which 'wrote back' combined elements from 'Western' cultures, in this case e.g. characters and plot lines from the British literary canon, with elements from other cultures, such as different (e.g. oral) narrative traditions and languages.[90] Such texts, the 'Western originals' as well as the rewritings, can function as mediators between the two (or more) cultures that are involved. Furthermore, the literary texts which are created through the act of 'writing back' can also be understood as results of cultural exchange processes.

The most important postcolonial term or concept, however, that cultural exchange theory can be related to, is 'hybridity'. Although the term 'hybridity', not least Homi Bhabha's work on hybridity and the creative potential of the third space[91], has certainly contributed to many interesting debates and results in postcolonial studies, I also acknowledge the concerns of those who find it too detached, too elitist and celebratory[92]. An exaggerated focus on the creativity of so-called hybrid minorities in the third space neglect the conflicts that can arise from the celebrated 'inbetweenness'. Terms such as hybridity and third space run the risk of remaining metaphors instead of explanations. In addition, I concur with the criticism of Virinder Kalra, Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk, i.e. that texts on hybridity tend to focus too much on cultural matters instead of on institutional mechanisms and are often content to remain on a metaphorical level instead of examining the political and economic conditions as well as the options and limits of the agency of those 'hybrids'.[93]

This is not to say, however, that I reject all hybridity approaches; in fact, I think that many ideas on hybridity can be linked to cultural exchange categories and research interests. What unites concepts of hybridity and cultural exchange is their challenge of essentialist categories.[94] Both approaches explain that there are no pure

[90] John McLeod refers to one of Ashcroft *et al.*'s examples for strategies of writing back: "refusing to follow standard English syntax and using structures derived from other languages […]" (McLeod 2010: 29.).
[91] Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
[92] Cf. e.g. Bachmann-Medick 2006 and Kalra *et al.* 2005: 7ff.
[93] Kalra *et al.* 2005: 7 and 15.
[94] Stuart Hall e.g. uses hybridity to challenge essentialist definitions of ethnicity (cf. Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." 1989. *Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Morley, David and Kuan-Hsing

cultures but dynamic exchange, appropriation and transformation processes – and that claims of things such as national identity, cultural purity and attempts to include and exclude people are highly political. In addition, Virinder Kalra *et al.* prefer to see hybridity as a process rather than a description of a state,[95] which makes it even more compatible with cultural exchange theory, relying as it does on a dynamic concept of exchange.

I have not come across a systematic approach or set of categories provided by theory texts on 'hybridity' that help me understand exchange processes. Cultural exchange theory, however, offers a systematic approach and another advantage: it is not limited to an analysis of diasporic groups as agents. It does work for exchange processes between ethnically different groups, but also for groups differing in class, gender, age and religion; it can also be used for non-marginal groups and for mainstream culture. Cultural exchange theory looks at the context, the institutions, the transformation and the effects on both sides of the exchange.

Another approach I find particularly interesting and helpful in the context of analysing novels representing cultural exchange (and its mediators, obstacles and conflicts) in their respective contexts are (postcolonial) takes on commodification. Scholars such as John Hutnyk, Virinder Kalra, Raminder Kaur, Graham Huggan and Anamik Saha have observed that nowadays an increasing number of cultural products by migrants and their children get labelled 'hybrid' and 'exotic' to be more successful on a mass market[96]. Some publishers, music labels and film producers appear to emphasize the ethnicity of the creators or the protagonists in order to communicate that they have come up with something new, something exotic and thus something exciting. In this context, works of art that celebrate 'hybridity' get a lot of support by the producers and attention by the media. This is referred to as commodification, i.e. that the products by migrants and their children get turned into commodities. Many critics warn that cultural products that get commodified and

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Chen (eds). London: Routledge, 1996. 441-449.). And Edward Said wrote: "all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic." (Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993. xxv.)

[95] Cf. Kalra *et al.* 2005: 29.

[96] See e.g. Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001; Hutnyk, John. *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry*. London: Pluto Press, 2000; Kalra, Virinder S., Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk. *Diaspora & Hybridity*. London: SAGE, 2005; Saha, Anamik. "The Postcolonial Cultural Economy: The Politics of British Asian Cultural Production." Dissertation. Goldsmith College, University of London, 2009.

attempt to be successful in the market or appeal to a mass audience run the risk of losing their ability to challenge the status quo. Often, they are blamed to be 'complicit' by implicitly or explicitly supporting the unequal power relations that exist e.g. in the field of cultural production.[97] In addition, referring to scholars such as John Hutnyk, Virinder Kalra and others, Anamik Saha sums up the fears that celebratory accounts of intercultural contact crowd out more critical representations that also include racism and conflicts: "[t]he immoderate valorisation of the hybrid quality of British Asian cultural production deflects attention away from the racial violence, and socioeconomic marginalisation that continues to blight South Asian communities in the UK."[98] This is a major concern of those postcolonial scholars that emphasize the political side of all representations, such as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and John Hutnyk, to name just a few.

A further disadvantage of dealing with cultural products with an exaggerated focus on the biography of the author is that it shifts the attention away from the actual book, film, song etc. Whether or not one is interested in the potential of hybrid authors and characters to deconstruct and question categories, hierarchies and universality claims, it is quite unsettling what is done e.g. in the book market to novels by non-white British authors. In a number of cases they get reduced to certain formulas (e.g. 'happy multicultural land' accounts) or they get reduced to the ethnicity (sometimes paired with gender and class) of the author, labelled an 'authentic account of migrant life in Britain' or something similar.[99] The novels in these cases are not seen as (independent) works of art anymore; their aesthetic aspects risk becoming secondary if noticed at all.

Theories on commodification are not without criticism. A summary of the most important arguments against those theories can be found in Anamik Saha's thesis on "The Postcolonial Cultural Economy: The Politics of British Asian Cultural

[97] Hutnyk and Kalra call our attention to another aspect: "We can examine explicit public moments of cultural exchange – food, music, film – and ask if hybridity helps our analysis of the culture industry." (Kalra *et al.* 2005: 93). In this context they come up with the question why some things are labelled as hybrid and others are not. Their thesis is that things are called hybrid and celebrated as long as they don't question too much of the status quo and sell (cf. ibid.: 95). So 'hybridity' as such does not explain anything, but the way the term 'hybridity' is used tells us something about our cultural industries and culturally dominant people and institutions (cf. ibid.: 95).

[98] Saha 2009: 18.

[99] A quotation from *The New Statesman* is included in the Black Swan *Brick Lane* edition (2004): the novel "exposes a hidden world and allows the reader a detailed and fascinating glimpse into British Bengali culture."

Production"[100]. To sum it up, parts of the theoretical foundations of commodification theories are rooted in economic determinism and overlook questions of agency.[101]

But how does this 'commodification' happen? Is it something that the publishers do? Or the bookshops, reviewers or readers? Or might the authors and their choices also play a part in this game? This is why I will not only look at the aesthetic components of my primary texts but also at the history of production, including the book cover, reviews, marketing campaigns, and the reception (where data is available)[102]. I will strive to explain what kind of picture is painted with the aesthetic means of the novel, what the effects of the aesthetic choices are – first of all potentially and secondly how the actual texts were received (if there was a visible reaction). Publishers have been seen to design book covers and marketing campaigns to highlight these authors' multicultural roots in an attempt to create an 'exotic' product and 'authenticity' claims in order to sell more copies. Reviewers, readers and in some cases even scholars can be complicit in this game. Such strategies as well as bandwagon effects will be explained in the context of the contemporary literary field in Britain in chapter 3, while the detailed analysis of such strategies for my primary texts follows in chapter 4. In my specific cases I want to highlight which methods of commercialisation or commodification were applied and to what end. In addition, I will show where my novels refer to these processes and how they play with them or attempt to resist them.

An unease concerning the missing explanation of how commodification comes about is also shared by Anamik Saha: "While it makes an important intervention in terms of exposing how the unruly and disruptive effects of difference and hybridity are subsumed by capitalistic production, it fails to demonstrate *how this process actually occurs*."[103] The solution Anamik Saha offers is to situate these phenomena in the context of postcolonial cultural production in the global cultural economy and to analyse the institutions involved.[104] He suggests a "more discursive model, where different aesthetic, social and cultural values, produced through a

[100] Cf. Saha 2009: 18ff.
[101] Cf. Saha 2009: 22.
[102] Virinder Kalra *et al.* emphasize that the author and the text are not the only factors that influence the reception of a text: "It is often wrongly assumed that diasporic cultural products are inherently progressive solely because they expose and question the boundaries of the nation or of some other normative social forms such as the nuclear family. Even where this is the case, and conventional norms are transgressed, cultural products are always open to appropriation, repackaging and sale by the market." (Kalra *et al.* 2005: 42.)
[103] Saha 2009: 21f.
[104] Cf. ibid.: 22.

dynamic relation between structure and agency, are imprinted on the commodity during manufacture“[105].

Transcultural (world) literature or transcultural English studies (as used e.g. by Frank Schulze-Engler and other scholars, in particular in Frankfurt/Main) are also interested in cultural exchange and diasporic constellations[106]. Whether they see themselves as postcolonial scholars or not remains unclear at times. On the one hand, there are many overlaps between ‘transcultural English studies’ and postcolonial studies: Frank Schulze-Engler mentions some “important legac[ies] of postcolonial studies” such as the emphasis on the “political dimensions of literature” or the “local and regional contexts of literature”[107], but on the other hand, he also criticises many postcolonial concepts and agendas severely.[108] By using the term transculturality as coined by Wolfgang Welsch[109], these scholars claim to shift the focus from cultures to individuals through their interest in ‘transnational connections.’ “The primary subjects and actors in this scenario are no longer cultures but people, and the main interest no longer lies in the problem of how cultures shape social groups and their perceptions, but in the question of what individuals and groups do with culture in an increasingly globalised world.”[110]

To some extent, ‘transcultural English studies’ are also interested in cultural exchange processes. However, even though cultural exchange processes can lead to transcultural phenomena, not every contact or constellation that cultural exchange theory analyses necessarily leads to transcultural results. In addition, ‘transcultural English studies’ might tackle similar texts (similar to my primary texts) and writers, but with different tools that they do not always make explicit. Furthermore, ‘transcultural studies’ run the risk of overlooking important factors if they renounce

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[105] Ibid.: 29.
[106] Cf. Helff, Sissy and Frank Schulze-Engler (eds). *Transcultural English studies. Theories, Fictions, Realities.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. See in particular Sissy Helff’s article on “Shifting Perspectives – The Transcultural Novel.” in the above mentioned collection (75-90).
[107] Schulze-Engler, Frank. “Theoretical Perspectives: From Postcolonialism to Transcultural World Literature.” *English Literatures Across the Globe. A Companion.* Eckstein, Lars (ed.). Paderborn: Fink, 2007. 28.
[108] Cf. ibid.: 20-26.
[109] The term ‘transculturation’ was coined by Fernando Ortiz, who was interested in cultural transfer and exchange processes and in particular in the weaker side in the process; the term ‘transculturality’ was coined by Wolfgang Welsch, who emphasized that cultures are not separated and “self-enclosed entities”, but in constant flow (cf. Schulze-Engler, Frank. “Introduction.” *Transcultural English Studies. Theories, Fictions, Realities.* Helff, Sissy and Frank Schulze-Engler (eds). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009. xi.)
[110] Schulze-Engler 2007: 28.

everything that has to do with 'culture'. If everything was transcultural, if everything was somehow connected to everything, the cultural aspects of (ex)change processes would be hard to analyse. Individual agents and institutions act in a number of specific contexts, and cultural contexts are part of these, as can be observed in ethnological and sociological studies as well as in (literary) representations.[111]

There is no consolidated "transcultural theory" or methodology (yet)[112]. I encountered some interesting statements and thoughts, but no systematic approach – and the interesting aspects were not exclusive to transcultural studies, such as the criticism of concepts of hybridity. Again, there are many different approaches dealing with exchange processes, globalisation and local contexts as well as transcultural phenomena, but cultural exchange theory provides the analytical categories which I find most productive.

However, there are also some limits to cultural exchange theory. Cultural exchange can be instrumentalised – just as "hybridity". However, I would like to point out that both terms or concepts are not positive as such, even though they carry positive connotations in some contexts. While "exchange" can indicate reciprocity, the encounters analysed can also be unilateral transfers. Cultural exchange theory is process-oriented and does not imply a hierarchy such as e.g. the term "integration", where one side has to integrate into a superior one. "Cultural exchange" can also be used for encounters on a level playing field. While this is not always the case in the fictional encounters analysed here, the term as such does not indicate a hierarchy. Cultural exchange theory offers an approach and valuable tools to analyse the processes behind cultural exchange as well as hybrid (or transcultural) people, objects, practices etc.

Cultural exchange theory does not provide agendas for the activation of groups and the initiation of social change. This is not their concern; it is rather of interest for some postcolonial sociologist such as Virinder Kalra *et al.* and others

[111] One does not have to limit oneself to national cultures, of course, there are many more important factors, such as age, class, religion etc. As my analysis of the novel *The White Family* will show, working-class culture can be an important context for exchange processes or their rejection.

[112] I could not find a shared method with clearly defined categories of analysis in the postcolonial or transcultural theories mentioned in this chapter. A method is defined as "composed of a systematic sequence of rules, principles and analytical stages" and should be a "well-defined, planned and therefore also verifiable procedure for dealing with something" (Nünning, Vera and Ansgar Nünning. *An Introduction to the Study of English and American Literature*. Stuttgart: Klett, 2007. 36f.). I did not encounter such well defined procedures and categories of analysis, but a large number of interesting terms and theories that I would like to contribute to by combining it with the categories and procedures suggested by cultural exchange theory.

primarily interested in the political side. What cultural exchange theory can do is provide instruments to make processes of social change visible – in my case their representations and their connection to the context of these representations.

There are changes that cultural exchange theory cannot grasp – not every change is caused by cultural exchange. As the analyses of my primary texts will show, there are occasions of change where the change does not necessarily have to do with cultural exchange – and there, I am afraid, cultural transfer theory is only of limited value.

I believe that cultural exchange theory is a promising approach for my endeavour. In addition to the categories it provides, there are also many points of connection between postcolonial concepts and cultural exchange studies, even though cultural exchange is not exclusive to colonial and postcolonial periods.

The specific categories provided by cultural exchange theory can and need to be amended for specific research questions, but even in their original form they increase our awareness for and draw our attention to aspects that are sometimes forgotten because they are not explicitly mentioned in other theories. This is not to say that other (e.g. postcolonial) scholars interested in exchange processes and hybridity never look at e.g. mediators, but they might overlook blind spots, reciprocal exchanges etc. Cultural exchange theory provides tools that help to resolve the criticism often used against hybridity, and it is a systematic approach that helps researchers to deal with many concepts and terms that were introduced by postcolonial studies.

Cultural exchange theory allows me to analyse exchange processes, agents, institutions, transformations and, where applicable, the destabilizing and challenging potential of such processes as well as their representations. In the following section, I will explain how cultural exchange categories can be productively linked to a narratological analysis.

2.3. The Semantisation of Literary Forms of Representation

A combined approach of cultural exchange theory and narratology can be a productive way to analyse novels that are dealing with aspects of migration and heterogeneous societies, contemporary ones as well as novels written and set in the past. In this chapter, I will discuss the key functions of those forms of literary

representation that can be related to cultural exchange. Questions I address are: which aesthetic means can be used to represent cultural exchange, what are their functions and how can we profitably link narratological and cultural exchange analyses as well as text and context analyses?

Literary forms of representation can carry and construct meaning.[113] While there is obviously no formula to say: mode x equals function y, nevertheless, some modes lend themselves more easily to certain interpretations than others, depending on their context.[114] Along the lines of the productive fusion of narratology and gender studies, I want to find out how social, economic and political conditions of contemporary Britain are processed via the selection of topics and narratological techniques in my primary texts, and how the specific modes of representation influence the perception of the text, its characters and particular scenes in their respective context.

The potential of the semantisation of literary forms cannot be revealed through purely text-immanent readings. This holds true in particular in the case of contemporary novels dealing with migration. These novels are particularly context-dependent, not least because they treat contemporary social and political conditions overtly. In many of those novels one can find references and takes on e.g. debates on multiculturalism and the often criticised term 'integration', comments on citizenship policies as well as individual and institutional racism. In addition, a solely political reading does not do justice to these novels which are still works of art. Elleke Boehmer, who discusses postcolonial texts and their aesthetics in an essay, points out that it is not enough to analyse the political side of texts, but that the aesthetic side needs to be analysed as well.[115]

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[113] They are independent carriers of meaning: "eigenständige Bedeutungsträger" (Nünning, Ansgar and Vera Nünning. "Von der feministischen Narratologie zur *gender*-orientierten Erzähltextanalyse." *Erzähltextanalyse und Gender Studies*. Nünning, Ansgar and Vera Nünning (eds). Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004. 11.).

[114] The juxtaposition of multiple perspectives, for example, can be used to increase the suspense in a crime novel. In a novel about Muslim immigrants in the UK, however, this technique might have a political function and show (rather than tell) that Muslim immigrants are not a homogenous group. So the functions of the means of representation vary depending on the social and/or political context of the text, the degree to which it refers to such contexts, the topic and genre of the text etc.
A prominent example is the function of unreliable narrators in late Victorian novels. The fact that the conventionally reliable and omniscient narrator who tended to work as a centre for moral orientation was suddenly revealed to be unreliable, can be read as an invitation to question master narratives in fiction and society.

[115] Boehmer, Elleke. "A postcolonial aesthetic. Repeating upon the present." *Rerouting the Postcolonial. New Directions for the New Millennium*. Wilson, Janet, Christina Şandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh (eds). London: Routledge, 2010. 170.

While postcolonial literary criticism runs the risk of over-using metaphors in their interpretations and often privilege middle-class or elite perspectives[116], an investigation of the aesthetic side in connection with cultural exchange theory will help us appreciate both the artistic and the political aspect of a text. This can be achieved by analysing both content and form, identifying the potential (*Wirkungspotential*) of the literary form of representation and investigating how the specific mode of representation may have an impact on the way the respective text can be read. The aim is to link analyses of the narratological structure or form, the content and sociocultural aspects. In addition, if possible, the interpretations or perceptions the text created, e.g. reviews, protests, other reactions, should be taken into account. The key aspects that influence the reading of a text are its aesthetic form, the context and the reader, to be more precise, the readers' background knowledge, political attitude, emotions etc. While those last aspects cannot be identified for all readers, the analysis of literary forms can be achieved through the application of narratological methods. As the primary texts are so laden with references such as allusions and comments to contemporary politics and discourse, they encourage a context-informed (political) reading and reader participation.

In my primary texts, the most important aesthetic modes of representation in connection to cultural exchange are narrative transmission, multiple perspectives and how they relate to each other, plot lines, the steering of reader expectations, dramatic irony, the use of metaphors as well as the semantisation of time and space.

2.3.1. Narrative Transmission and Multiple Perspectives

All the information the reader of a novel receives is mediated trough a narrative instance or characters or a combination of both. This is why narrative transmission is such a key issue in literary analyses. The analysis will show how and through which narrative instance the reader receives the information, how reliable this information is and what impact the aesthetic form has on the function or reception of the text in connection with cultural exchange.

I take from Gérard Genette's theory on narrative transmission[117] the distinction between voice (who speaks?) and mode (who sees?),[118] as the answers to

[116] Cf. Parry, Benita. *Postcolonial Studies. A Materialist Critique*. London: Routledge, 2004. In particular 55ff.
See also: Bachmann-Medick, Doris. *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006. 202f., 205f.
[117] Cf. Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse.* New York: Cornell University Press, 1980.

these questions reveal whose judgements and whose perspectives are represented. Questions about issues of representation such as who speaks for whom, who is represented in the story and who is not, are relevant for a cultural exchange-related analysis. It is also relevant to identify who exactly evaluates the encounters and potential cultural exchange processes – a narrative instance or a character. In addition, the presence and absence of characters and points-of-view are also relevant for cultural exchange: as there is always more than one party involved in a cultural exchange process a look at the character inventory makes the potential and actual agents visible. It can also hint at asymmetrical relations and imbalances if one perspective is absent or underprivileged compared to the others.

A key benefit of bringing together literary analysis and cultural exchange theory is linked to the particular possibilities of the genre of the novel. Novels can do something for readers that non-fictional texts and other sources hardly achieve: through different techniques of narrative transmission, novels can explore and confront the reader with insights about the characters' psychological states and motivations when it comes to intercultural contact. This holds true in particular for the case of focalisation, where readers receive information filtered through the mind or consciousness of a character and thus are able to experience a story from a biased perspective. In addition, novels can portray many different perspectives at the same time and play with alternative possibilities. Through narratological approaches one can analyse the construction of the characters' *Innenwelt* and thus appreciate the artistic side as well as content-related aspects. For example: if an author chooses to employ marginalised focalisers, this could be interpreted as an attempt to give those usually marginalised a voice and present a counter discourse to the dominant voices. Also, the readers can experience through identification with a migrant protagonist what it feels like to be discriminated against. The primary texts chosen for this thesis do not only have marginalised protagonists – this is a trend that can rather be observed in earlier texts on migration and migrants, e.g. texts from Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* from 1956 to novels written in the 1980s and 1990s. Because the primary texts chosen for this thesis offer more than one perspective, the texts carry the potential to show both sides or even more agents connected to an exchange situation.

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[118] "Genette makes a distinction between voice and mode: voice is concerned with 'Who speaks?' (the narrator? a character?) and mode with 'Who sees?' (or the perspective from which the story is presented)." Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. 98.

Through forms of narrative transmission, aspects of cultural exchange such as the motivation for exchange or its rejection, the assessment of the exchange and how the characters relate to each other and feel about it (e.g. identity questions and power relations) can be played out. The possibility to look 'inside the characters's minds' allows us to explore questions of why cultural exchange does or does not happen, and how this may influence a character's identity. This mode allows us to encounter explanations of how exchange can take place and how the objects, practices etc. are adapted.

Narrators and characters – and thus also their perspectives – are biased by their sex, gender, class, age, religion, ethnicity and cultural affiliation.[119] This allows the reader to perceive a character as a member of a specific culture or group and then observe what happens in terms of cultural exchange when s/he meets someone from a different culture. Experiments with different situations and consequences as well as their evaluation can be linked to the contemporary British context of my chosen novels and thus influence the reception of the text.

A combined analysis of narrative transmission, characterisation and plot analysis can help to answer questions about who the mediators are as well as who is privileged, e.g. in terms of information but also education, social status and power. In texts dealing with migration and intercultural encounters there are usually many references to the social context. These choices about narrative transmission are made by the author and can be one area where (political) statements and comments can be made.

Although contemporary British novels that explore the consequences of migration use a huge variety of different techniques, one can identify one common denominator: the primary texts that are analysed in chapter 4 do not have explicit or overt narrators who function as reliable authorities and give the reader clues about how to judge the characters and their actions, i.e. how to interpret the novel. Many novels rather use a variety of different perspectives that are juxtaposed through the employment of focalisation. Readers have to figure out whom they want to trust and whose judgements they want to agree with (if at all). This can be understood as a technique to increase the readers' participation: as the narration is often fragmented and confronts the reader with multiple perspectives and points of view which all present their own way of legitimizing their opinions, there is no sharp dividing line

[119] About gendered characters and narrators see Nünning *et al.* 2004: 1f.

between right and wrong. Instead of situations that are either black or white, there are many shades of grey. This keeps the readers on their toes. They have to make their own decision on the basis of the different pieces of information that have been presented to them and are encouraged to question simple-sounding answers such as the dominant narratives on migration, cultural exchange and integration.

The question of how the multiple perspectives relate to each other[120] can be connected to the ideas above. While multiple perspectives that can be consolidated suggest a shared world view, this is only rarely the case in contemporary British novels (and if so, often to celebrate positive notions of multiculturalism). If the perspectives cannot be consolidated, this leaves the reader with the feeling that there is not just 'the one' way to assess things which may be read as a statement against oversimplifications. Ambiguities and contradictions usually require more reader participation.

If multiple perspectives come from one perceivedly homogeneous group only, e.g. the Muslim community in Britain with Pakistani or Bangladeshi roots, but represent at the same time a whole spectrum of points of view, then this might help to communicate that the group is not as homogenous as often perceived in public discourse but in fact as heterogeneous as any other group of different individuals[121].

If there is an imbalance of different perspectives, those perspectives that are privileged might gain more importance over those less present. However, the under-privileging of certain perspectives might also reflect who is silent or silenced in 'real life'. How the reader is guided in his or her reactions plays a crucial role: the perspectives of those characters we deem more likable have more 'weight'. For example, no matter how much 'air time' Dirk gets in Maggie Gee's novel *The White Family*, his Skinhead perspective will not become more legitimate because he is not created to be liked by the reader – one might feel pity for him, but that is the extent of it. The privileging of a character's perspective connected to sympathetic portrayal can lead to more identification with this respective character and thus more legitimacy, which can then again have an impact on the whole text's ideological slant.

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[120] I use this expression to make up for the lack of an English equivalent for the term *Perspektivenstruktur*.

[121] In public discourse, Muslims are often perceived as one group because of their religion. If thus summarized, differences in age, class, sex, gender, ethnicity etc. are overlooked, which restricts the value of statements based on such generalization, to put it mildly. However, it should be obvious that more than 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide cannot be regarded as one coherent group.

2.3.2. Characters and Characterisation

The following observation might appear obvious at first glance, but it is quite important to be aware of the fact that already through the compilation of the stock of characters, the author determines whose perspectives are potentially available and whose voice can be heard. If there are e.g. no migrant characters present in a text, their perspective might be left out or it might be mediated through other characters speaking for them and thus confronting the reader with problems of representation. The stock of characters and the characterisation techniques employed also reveal which characters serve as mediators for cultural exchange processes.

In the case of novels of migration with a clear connection between text and context the characters can represent the different perspectives of contemporary British society and thus assume a mimetic function in realist texts. All of the selected novels are written in this realist convention. Theory has it that characters are textual constructs and constructed analogous to real persons.[122] These analogies might encourage readers to compare the characters in the text with themselves or other people and thus create their own connections between text and context. A diverse stock of characters e.g. confronts readers with a differentiated picture of groups involved in current debates, e.g. perspectives of white and non-white characters, religious and non-religious ones, female and male characters as well as characters from different generations etc.

Questions that need to be addressed in connection with characterisation are how characters are characterised and through whom, and what this implies for cultural exchange analyses. To tackle the first question: characters can be characterised through the narrator, other characters or themselves, e.g. through their thoughts, actions, their use of language, i.e. through explicit and implicit auto- and hetero-characterisation. Even a character's name might have an effect on the novel's reception: in the case of telling names it might trigger associations, a name might reveal something about the character's origin or religion, and if the names allude to intertextual references such as myths, the name might even serve as an outlook for future incidents.

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[122] Cf. Gymnich, Marion. "Konzepte literarischer Figuren und Figurencharakterisierung." *Erzähltextanalyse und Gender Studies*. Nünning, Ansgar and Vera Nünning (eds). Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004. 129. For more details on the conventions of realist novels see e.g. Walder, Dennis. *The Realist Novel*. London: Routledge, 1996. See also footnote 276 on realist conventions and *Brick Lane*.

Language can be used for characterisation and also as an area where cultural exchange can take place. While language can be e.g. a class- or subculture marker or simply a marker for non-native speakers, it can be used to show the reader that characters from different origins are brought together in a contact situation. Furthermore, changes in a character's use of language can be results of cultural exchange, e.g. the incorporation of new or 'foreign' words in their day-to-day language, new word creations etc. Without wanting to play down potential problems that might arise from misunderstandings resulting from language barriers, the use of non-standard English has increased in many contemporary novels and can be welcomed as an acknowledgement of diversity and a movement away from the perception that only BBC English is 'proper' or legitimate English – a distorted picture that discriminates against the majority of people who use English every day.

Every explicit or implicit characterisation of a character through another character is an implicit characterisation of the latter. How is this relevant for a cultural exchange analysis? It is part of a character's construction of identity, reveals how they construct borders between themselves and 'others' and is also part of how they assess 'the others'. Through characterisation and focalisation novels can make explicit how identities and boundaries are constructed. Through these means of literary representation, the author can construct an 'inside perspective' on cultural exchange processes – and thus confront the reader with different stages and perceptions of such processes. Negative characterisation of a character or group through a different group can reveal existing prejudice – and thus also obstacles for encounters and successful cultural exchange.

The way in which novels can reflect on or make readers aware of the constructedness of identity and culture counterbalances some public debates and the media, where people are reduced to one of the facets of their identity only, e.g. their religion or geographic origin. Despite such almost omnipresent oversimplifications, sociologists argue that identity does not only depend on one single category (e.g. nationality, gender, religion or colour of skin) and this is increasingly reflected in literary texts, where characters can construct their identity through choosing from and rejecting multiple facets that are available to them. The context of their situation might influence which aspects are dominant in a particular situation. Theories on

intersectionality can provide insights into how different categories intersect in cases of discrimination.[123]

In the context of cultural exchange, this can be used as a way to portray a more differentiated picture of individuals and groups whose perception in public discourse might be biased through stereotypes. It also highlights that culture as well as identity is not a fixed category but a construct in a dynamic process – and cultural exchange plays a part in it. Categories such as 'self' and 'other/foreign' are also constantly 'under construction', another reminder that there can be no pretending that there is a beginning and end to cultural exchange or such thing as 'pure' cultural states in the cultural exchange process.

It is also interesting to analyse how contacts with characters from different cultural backgrounds influence a character's self-image and perception by others. Characters who are portrayed as oscillating between cultures and who take an active part in cultural exchange are particularly interesting for such an analysis. Through characterisation and focalisation analyses one can also show whether an aspect the reader knows as 'new' for a character is still perceived as a 'foreign' addition by the character or whether it has been incorporated completely into their own self-image. The change in identity constructions can be an indicator for cultural exchange processes.

Furthermore, an important function of characterisation techniques is that they can be used to steer the reader's opinion. The empathy the reader feels with a character depends on how the character is constructed, if e.g. a character's actions, thoughts and views seem justifiable and if there is something the reader can identify with. Examples are shared family situations, a similar experience of discrimination or a comparable social environment. The reader's reaction may also depend on the time the narrative spends on a character: if a lot of text and time is spent on making a character a round character, it encourages the reader to engage with her or him, in particular if the character is not ridiculed or discredited, say through racist remarks. The evaluation of cultural exchange or its failure by those characters deemed likeable tends to have an impact on the overall effect of the novel because the feeling the reader is left with is usually connected with the fates of those privileged characters.

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[123] The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (cf. e.g. Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43.6 (1991). 1241-1299.). See also: Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *On Intersectionality: The Essential Writings of Kimberle Crenshaw*. New York: New Press, 2012.

In the primary texts in this study, the characterisation techniques tend to be ambiguous and sometimes even contradictory. The reader is often forced to revise his or her assessments and refrain from thinking in categories. This is particularly the case for judgments connected with ethnicity and culture.

An analysis of the characterisation and contrasting of different perspectives (*Kontrast- und Korrespondenzrelationen*[124]) offers the opportunity to investigate in how far some shared or contrasting features influence the outcome of a situation. The contrasting of an English working-class family with an immigrant working-class family and their coping strategies might help to show how conventions, class-based systems or the contemporary context influence the characters' lives, success and satisfaction. A possible outcome of such an analysis could be that if both contrasted groups suffer from the same problems, the observed discrimination might be less due to skin colour, language or culture, but simply refer to class affiliations. If different characters or groups suffer from the same conventions, this could suggest that the problem is shared[125] or concerns more people than one might think at first. Another example for the contrasting of characters is the confrontation of different generations. In connection with cultural exchange, the differences between generations frequently point to the process of cultural exchange and its connection to social and cultural change.

2.3.3. The Semantisation of Time and Space: Social Contexts and Contact Zones

Time and space describe the setting of a novel and often carry references to the social and historical context[126]. The novels at hand often use settings such as specific areas in London or events such as the burning of Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* or crimes such as Stephen Lawrence's murder to establish a connection to the real world. In addition, time and space help to create atmosphere and are yet another means of characterisation. This can provide the reader with information about a character's perception of her/his surroundings and thus allows inferences about their attitudes, mental state etc.

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[124] Cf. Gymnich 2004: 137. See also Pfister, Manfred. *Das Drama*. 11th edition. München: Fink, 2001. 232-238.

[125] Cf. Gymnich 2004: 137. What Marion Gymnich did for gender conventions can be transferred to discrimination linked to ethnicity or origin as well.

[126] Cf. Würzbach, Natascha. "Raumdarstellung." *Erzähltextanalyse und Gender Studies*. Nünning, Ansgar and Vera Nünning (eds). Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004. 49.

Paul Ricoeur sees the relation between text and context as a mimetic one and sees in this referential relation between text and context the basis for their potential to provide insights and possibly even to shape the respective other world.[127] What Ricoeur says for time can also be applied to space. On the basis of Paul Ricoeur's theories, Eveline Kilian claims that the experience of time can be linked to a character's identity, as the telling of a character's life story is part of her/his subject formation.[128] Such stories can be analysed in terms of cultural exchange processes and how they relate to the character's identity formation. Furthermore, the characters' preoccupation with certain periods might reveal why a character engages in cultural exchange or why not. Conservative characters who 'live in the past' and want to save or restore (supposed) pure states of culture or identity are usually reluctant to engage in intercultural encounters and exchange. In my analysis I investigate how periods and their experience of time and space are connected to certain characters and what consequences this has on the character's contact situations, identity formation and involvement in cultural exchange.

In the context of the semantisation of space, scholars such as Natascha Würzbach claim that there is a "reciprocal relation between the experience of space and identity construction."[129] The categories that Natascha Würzbach identified for a narrative analysis linked to gender studies can be transferred to cultural exchange analyses as well: 1) accessibility of spaces and transgressions, 2) location and movement of characters, 3) gender-specific/ethnicity-specific experience and construction of meaning.[130]

As certain spaces are often associated with characters of a certain gender, class, ethnicity etc., it is interesting to investigate how the respective novel deals with these associations. In the selected texts, however, the representations of space serve first and foremost as (mimetic) links to the social contexts. The novels do not make

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[127] Cf. Ricoeur, Paul. "Mimesis, Reference and Refiguration in *Time and Narrative*." *Scripsi* 5.4 (1989): 92. See also: Kilian, Eveline. "Zeitdarstellung." *Erzähltextanalyse und Gender Studies*. Nünning, Ansgar and Vera Nünning (eds). Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2004. 75. In the original: "Diese Argumentation setzt die Annahme einer prizipiellen Kompatibilität, einer 'Durchlässigkeit' zwischen lebensweltlicher Realität und literarischem Text voraus, die Ricoeur 'Referenz' nennt und die die Basis für eine wechselseitige Erhellung der beiden Bereiche bildet. Damit wird der Literatur eine wichtige Erkenntnis- und möglicherweise auch eine Gestaltungsfunktion im Hinblick auf die extraliterarische Wirklichkeit zugeschrieben." (Kilian interpreting Ricoeur 1989: 91-93).

[128] Cf. Kilian 2004: 78.

[129] Würzbach 2004: 55 (my translation, S.v.L.).

[130] Würzbach 2004: 57 (my translation, S.v.L.; in the original: "1. Zugänglichkeit und Grenzüberschreitung, 2. Standort und Bewegung der Figuren, 3. geschlechtsspezifische Erlebnisweisen und Bedeutungszuweisungen.").

use of the full potential of space representations to turn expected associations on their heads, disclose how the associations or even stereotypes are constructed and then suggest a different use and (re)appropriations.

In addition to the functions that space and time have in common, space can also serve as a contact zone. I will show how characters inhabit certain spaces – and in this context whether the text refers to discrimination – and if and how the characters move between spaces, as this might create contact situations that are relevant for cultural exchange. Transgressions of space might also be signs of social mobility or means of emancipation, and the cultural as well as gender, class and age aspects that might play a role in this context will be taken into consideration. However, one must not forget that transgressions and migration are not *per se* voluntary endeavours with favourable consequences. The role of mental spaces such as the subconscious (e.g. dreams, fantasies, but also religious or spiritual experience) as spaces where characters can enjoy freedom from imposed restrictions are also interesting in some cases.[131] As spaces such as living quarters and public spaces have special functions, they will be analysed in more detail, e.g. with regard to restriction of access, different power structures, (in)voluntary contact etc.

One could easily write a whole thesis on theories on the semantisation of time and space. In my research I will focus on time and space as literary forms that can establish links to social reality. In addition, I will investigate if characters from multicultural backgrounds are limited or privileged in their access to and movement across spaces, how characters who are visibly different from white majority experience space and time and how this is evaluated in the novel.

2.3.4. Plots and Reader Participation

The four primary texts of this study were found to use quite stereotypical plot patterns. There are honour killings and arranged marriages as well as female characters which are oppressed by their religion (Islam) and communities. They usually contain elements of conflict resulting from contrasting relations between the protagonists (often based on alleged cultural difference) and their resolution or escalation. There are two main groups of novel endings: one with almost Aristotelic endings that seem to envisage some kind of catharsis in the end, and another one

[131] Cf. Würzbach 2004: 61ff. A retreat to these mental spaces, however, can be an obstacle to cultural exchange processes, e.g. if the character rejects all contact to other characters as a result.

with open endings and unresolved conflicts which do not leave the reader at ease, but rather rejects the celebration of multiculturalism.

In some cases, cultural exchange and an appropriation of British rules for social organisation are heralded as a solution to the female characters' problems. And while some novels employ different perspectives and episodic structures, the form of the novel of development seems to have recurred in contemporary British writing. This form seems particularly apt to deal with a characters' personal development and psychological conditions and can cover cultural exchange processes and the coping strategies of migrants and their families in Britain. Also, this form often contains some elements of movement, travel or quest and can thus build up contrasting situations in order to trace the development of a character through her/his confrontation with 'others'/'the other' and what s/he makes out of it. A prominent example for this form is Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*, in which the reader follows the protagonist's life from her birth in Bangladesh to Britain, from a life where others decide for her to her questioning this condition and breaking free from it.

An analysis of intertextual references can also be productive for a cultural-exchange-informed analysis as it can increase the awareness of cultural exchange processes on an aesthetic level, e.g. through the combination of different forms and traditions as well as references to practices and objects from different cultures. One example is the combination of Hindu, Muslim and English symbols and stories in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps For Lost Lovers*, through which he achieves to create a cultural exchange result on the aesthetic level while the majority of his characters cannot manage to recombine English and Pakistani or Muslim cultures without problems.

Encouraging Reader Participation

Reader expectations are related to genre conventions and plot lines they might recognize from previous reading experience or related to their own experience. By guiding readers to read a text in a certain way, a text can build up reader expectations. If these expectations are then disappointed, e.g. because characters and/or narrators are revealed to be unreliable or the course of action changes completely and the story gets an unexpected twist, readers are forced to question their judgment. The same holds true for unexpected results of cultural exchange processes, be it through misunderstandings or a surprising reinterpretation of an

object, word, practice etc. on the one hand. On the other hand, misunderstandings do not have to be creative and positive either as they can lead to (violent) conflicts and negative consequences.

Seeing one's own system of knowledge and explanation fail is one step on the way to teach an audience something new[132], so the use of this technique can be interpreted as encouragement to readers to challenge everything (in text and context). This can fulfil a didactic function. Without moralizing remarks ambivalent depictions and constructions and deconstructions of expectations help a text to refrain from painting 'black-and-white pictures', from categorisation and oversimplification. In novels dealing with multicultural constellations, this technique appears particularly apt to expose stereotypes and how they develop, on the part of the characters as well as the readers' part.

The use of dramatic irony is yet another technique to encourage questioning and initiate reader participation. In the case of dramatic irony, the reader has more information than a character whose expectations and assumptions might be inappropriate because s/he only knows part of the story. The readers, on the other hand, can see behind the misconceptions because of their greater knowledge, but might also be reminded of the fact that nobody can ever know everything and transfer this awareness to their own lives. In case the characters miss information because of their own refusal to speak to other characters or because they are segregated from those with the relevant information, this could be a call for more and unrestricted communication.

In connection to cultural exchange, dramatic irony can be used to work with different views on exchange processes: while the characters can only see part of the 'big picture', the reader might see more aspects and thus anticipate an upcoming conflict, see behind generational conflicts etc. The reader who knows more than the characters can trace how conflicts start and escalate and how some conflicts could be prevented if the characters involved knew what was going on. These insights are potentially transferable to real-life scenarios of intercultural encounters so that the literary representations in the novel might work as a means to encourage a more differentiated and reflected cohabitation.

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[132] Cf. Bain, Ken. "What Can Be Learnt from the Best College Teachers?" 29 October 2010. Conference: "Lehre neu denken! Die Zukunft des akademischen Lehrens & Lernens." Umweltforum Auferstehungskirche, Berlin. Speech.

2.3.5. Concluding Remarks

As the contemporary British novels chosen for this analysis are explicitly connected to their contexts, readers are encouraged to read the texts against the background of their socio-historical and political context. Also, through different techniques the readers are required to participate actively in the 'sense-making process' and are kept on their toes. While the political context cannot be ignored, the appreciation of the form must not be neglected either.

I analyse which effects the respective forms of representation evoke in the selected texts in connection with cultural exchange categories. Cultural exchange theory benefits from the combination with narratological tools because this opens up new material that can be analysed. The category of (aesthetically refracted) reflection on and assessment of cultural exchange as well as psychological reasons for successful exchange or its rejection can be experimented with in the novel. And on a different level, the role of literature for cultural exchange can also be discussed.

Before I come to a detailed analysis of the selected novels, I will provide an overview of the historical context of post-war immigration to the UK as well as the conditions of production and reception in the literary field in chapter 3.

3. British Asian Novels in Context

This chapter gives a brief overview of the historical context against which the novels chosen for this thesis are set. Just as the novels, this section will focus on post WWII migration and its contexts. An increased interest in questions of 'race' and ethnicity as well as the (economic) success of representations of multicultural constellations provides a transition to the last section of this chapter, in which I explain the literary field context of contemporary British novels. This section covers such aspects as the conditions of production, book marketing and the impact of literary prizes.

3.1. Migration from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to the UK

Independence for India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

The most relevant time span for the primary texts of this study is the 20th century. At its beginning, British India was still a British colony, but there were already protests and fights for independence, which the British often oppressed with violence. The massacres in Amritsar in 1919 that are also referred to in *Maps For Lost Lovers* (cf. *MFLL*: 51-53) are a particularly infamous example. The British Indian Army General Dyer ordered to open fire on hundreds of people who were meeting in an enclosed garden and claimed they were plotting against the British.[133] Historians such as Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund claim that "this was not a show of force, but of a nervousness which indicated the beginning of the end of the British Indian empire."[134]

On 15 August 1947, India attained independence. The former state of British India was split up into India and Pakistan in the so-called Partition of India. Later on, in 1971, East Pakistan declared its independence from Pakistan and became Bangladesh. Conflicts between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have their origins even before the partition(s), but the creation of the new states sparked new violent outbursts.[135] When Pakistan was founded, many Muslims tried to move to Pakistan and a large number of Hindus tried to make it to India.[136] Many people were

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[133] Cf. Kulke, Hermann and Dietmar Rothermund. *A History of India*. 4th edition. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. 293f.

[134] Ibid.: 294.

[135] Cf. Pandey, Gyanendra. *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 2. For a comprehensive introduction to the partition of India see for example Talbot, Ian and Gurharpal Singh. *The Partition of India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[136] In Pakistan, the vast majority of over 96 per cent of the population is Muslim (cf. *Country Profile: Pakistan*. Library of Congress, 2005. http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Pakistan.pdf (accessed 3 October 2012).). In India, the main religions are Hinduism (80.5 per cent) and Islam (13.4 per cent)

murdered: "[s]everal hundred thousand people were estimated to have been killed; unaccountable numbers raped and converted; and many millions uprooted and transformed into official 'refugees' as a result of what have been called the partition riots."[137]

In the context of the partitions, many people left the subcontinent altogether – and the UK was one of the main destinations of the emigration. Religious tensions between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs are also visible in the UK, e.g. in the violent conflicts between Muslims and Sikhs in Southall.[138] References to such conflicts as well as the memories of the partition riots can be found in a number of contemporary British novels with Asian and British Asian characters, such as *Maps For Lost Lovers* and *Londonstani* in this study.

Short Overview: South Asian Migration to the UK[139]

In the context of the above-mentioned events and the connected violence, many people left India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and emigrated to the UK. Another group of South Asian migrants entered the UK when they were expulsed from Uganda when Idi Amin came to power in 1971.

In addition, many immigrants from the Subcontinent were recruited by the British Armed Forces and joined the British Army as soldiers for the First and Second World Wars. And after WWII, a "significant group of migrants was recruited by the state specifically to resolve labour shortages in certain sectors of the economy"[140]. The British Nationality Act of 1948 granted British citizenship and

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(cf. *Country Profile: India*. Library of Congress, 2004. http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/India.pdf (accessed 3 October 2012).). And in Bangladesh, the majority of the people is Muslim (89.5 per cent) (cf. Bangladesh. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. *Report on Sample Vital Registration System 2010*. Dhaka: BBS, 2011. http://www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/SVRS/SVRS-10.pdf (accessed 3 October 2012).).

[137] Pandey 2001: 2.

[138] Cf. Berg, Sebastian. "Einwanderung und multikulturelle Gesellschaft." *Länderbericht Großbritannien*. Kastendiek, Hans and Roland Sturm (eds). Bonn: bpb, 2006. 261. He bases some of his claims on Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin. "Race Relations in New Britain." *From Legislation to Integration? Race Relations in Britain*. Anwar, Muhammad, Patrick Roach and Ranjit Sondhi (eds). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000. 178-195.

[139] Migration can have many different reasons, such as political prosecution and exile, economic reasons, the search for better education and better living conditions or also natural disasters such as droughts, floods or other catastrophes, to name just the most prominent ones referred to in contemporary British novels. For my study, I do not make a difference between voluntary migration and travel or exile – unless the novel makes that distinction. In general, the reactions by white British as well as other migrants alike is often based on the colour of the skin of the person in question or assumptions about his or her religion, not so much on the individual story.

[140] Solomos, John. *Race and Racism in Britain*. 3rd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 50. These migrants came from European countries as well as the Commonwealth. Solomos even

equal status to all Commonwealth citizens. Immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent thus had the right to live and work in the UK without formal restrictions.[141]

However, the migration of black people to the UK was soon perceived of as 'trouble': "[t]he number of West Indian, Indian and Pakistani immigrants was a matter of concern for the cabinet during 1950-5 […] Throughout the 1950s the debate on immigration in parliament and the media focused on the need to control black immigration."[142] The riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958, which were incited by white racists who attacked black people, served as justification for some to describe black immigration as a 'problem' and to tighten immigration laws.[143] As a result, the entry to the UK and the rights of immigrants were continuously limited, e.g. through the 1962 and 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Acts, the Immigration Act of 1971, and the British Nationality Act of 1981.[144] Today, immigration is even more severely regulated and working permits are difficult to obtain for all immigrants, with some exceptions for EU citizens.

Those immigrants from South Asia who were allowed to enter and work in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, in particular those from India and Pakistan, found jobs in the coal, steel and textile industry where British workers were missing (cf. Berg 252). Avtar Brah sums it up aptly:

> In the main these were unskilled jobs involving unsociable hours of work, poor working conditions and low wages. Hence, Asian workers came to occupy some of the lowest rungs of the British employment hierarchy. Additionally, as ex-colonial subjects, they belonged to a group whose country was once ruled by Britain. From the beginning, therefore, the encounter

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argues that European migration was encouraged while the government attempted to discourage migration by black people from the colonies (cf. ibid.: 51).

[141] Cf. British Nationality Act, 1948. *Legislation.gov.uk*. London: HMSO, 1948. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1948/56/pdfs/ukpga_19480056_en.pdf (accessed 3 October 2012). Pakistan joined the Commonwealth in 1947, left in 1972 out of protest against Bangladesh's independence, and rejoined in 1989 (cf. "Pakistan." *The Commonwealthe Yearbook 2013*. Parry, Rupert Jones and Andrew Robertson (eds). Cambridge: Nexus, 2013. http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/pakistan_country_profile.pdf (accessed 20 June 2013).).

[142] Solomos 2003: 52f.

[143] Cf. Berg 2006: 252.

[144] For example, the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act established three categories of immigrants. Category A comprised Commonwealth citizens who already had jobs in the UK, category B were those who had skills needed in the UK (such as nurses and other staff for the NHS) (cf. Berg 2006: 253). The third category comprised all other Commonwealth immigrants. The number of category C immigrants was capped and those who had served in the British army were privileged (cf. Solomos 2003: 58). The 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the Immigration Act of 1971 and the British Nationality Act of 1981 were even stricter and limited immigration and the eligibility for British nationality even further. For an overview of immigration laws see Berg 2006: 253f. See also Solomos 2003: 48-75.

> between Asians and the white population was circumscribed by colonial precedents.[145]

Thus the contact between British people and immigrants was marked by inequality. This asymmetry must surely have had an effect on potential cultural exchange processes, for instance a felt pressure by the immigrant to assimilate in order to become part of the host society or improve their status.

Immigrants were not considered as equal citizens although they carried British passports; and the attitude of the British towards their new compatriots was often described as racist[146]. Antipathy and mistrust were not only directed against South Asian immigrants, but also against other groups, such as Caribbean and Chinese immigrants – and more recently, after the EU enlargement, also against Polish immigrants or Sinti and Roma. Many literary texts pick up these unequal relations and the racism towards immigrants, e.g. Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londonders*, Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia*, Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* – as well as the four novels analysed in detail in this study – to name some prominent ones from different periods.

Scholars suspect that the shortage on the housing market for affordable and habitable flats may have contributed to animosities even more than competition for jobs[147]. In addition to 'individual racism', institutional racism made the immigrants' (and later their children's) lives difficult. Scholars have criticised the racist school system[148], restrictive immigration laws[149] and state racism[150]. The most famous proof for the allegation of institutionalised racism practiced by the police is probably the Macpherson Report. This report was the result of an inquiry ordered by Home Secretary Jack Straw after the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a black British teenager, in 1993 in order to examine the suspicion that the police did not carry out the persecution of the suspects correctly for racist reasons. In his report, Macpherson found the London Metropolitan Police guilty of institutional racism. The report made

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[145] Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora. Contesting Identities*. 1996. London: Routledge, 2010. 21.
[146] Cf. Brah 2010, Berg 2006, Solomos 2003.
[147] Cf. Berg 2006: 252. See also Brah 2010: 22.
[148] Cf. e.g. Brah 2010: 40. See also Hanif Kureishi's account of how he was called "Pakistani Pete" by a teacher and nobody seemed to think this was strange (cf. "Hanif Kureishi *The Buddha of Suburbia*." World Book Club. *BBC World Service*. January 2003. http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/133_wbc_archive_new/page4.shtml (accessed 3 October 2012).).
[149] See above.
[150] Cf. Solomos 2003: 56f. Solomos refers to a "racialisation of the immigration issue" (ibid.) and discrimination through language, policies and legislation.

recommendations for change and caused an increase in awareness for different forms of racism.[151] The novel *The White Family* by Maggie Gee was inspired by the murder case and attempts to explore different perspectives and the backgrounds of racial hatred.[152]

Since the 1960s, many things have improved. However, racism still exists in many forms and shapes, and there are attempts to fight it on various levels, such as Race Relations Acts (1965, 1968, 1976, 2000), the Equality Act of 2000 and other anti-discrimination laws. In addition to legislation, there are also attempts to raise the people's awareness of different forms of racism, training efforts in schools and other public institutions to prevent racism, attempts to employ more ethnic minorities in public workplaces in order to achieve a representation similar to the demographic situation etc.

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, the situation has worsened once again – in particular for Muslims. Many cases of discrimination and violence against Muslims were registered during the last decade. The project of a multicultural society and the discourse on integration often remain problematic like Tony Blair's "duty to integrate speech"[153] from 2006 illustrates. Blair proclaims "The right to be different. The duty to integrate. That is what being British means." Yet it remains unclear what this "Britishness" that people need to adapt to consists of.[154]

This is by no means a complete account of immigration and reactions to it. It is merely an overview. The main time slot for immigration is the period from 1948-1962, before the laws changed and consequently limited immigration from the former colonies substantially.[155] Many of those who came stayed, started families and businesses and have children that were born and raised in the UK. "Immigrants

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[151] Cf. Muir, Hugh and Richard Sprenger. "How the Stephen Lawrence murder case changed Britain." *The Guardian* 3 January 2012. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/video/2012/jan/03/stephen-lawrence-murder-britain-video (accessed 4 January 2012).

[152] Jaggi, Maya. "Maya Jaggi in conversation with Maggie Gee: The White Family." *Wasafiri* 17.36 (2002). 5-10.

[153] Blair, Tony. "The Duty to Integrate: Shared British Values." 8 December 2006. Speech. http://ukingermany.fco.gov.uk/en/news/?view=Speech&id=4616073 (accessed 3 October 2012).

[154] Blair states: "But when it comes to our essential values – belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage – then that is where we come together, it is what we hold in common; it is what gives us the right to call ourselves British. At that point no distinctive culture or religion supercedes our duty to be part of an integrated United Kingdom." (ibid.) However, what this heritage should consist of is never mentioned explicitly. In addition, this understanding of integration moves away from a two-way approach towards a call for (partial) assimilation.

[155] Cf. Berg 2006: 251.

and their offspring have arrived in Britian."[156] They are represented on all class levels, fulfil public functions[157], they are teachers, policemen, entrepreneurs, commentators on radio and TV and participate in politics as well as cultural production.

Figures: Asians and British Asians in the UK

The 2011 Census revealed that 5.3 per cent of the total population in England and Wales identified themselves as Indian (2.5 per cent), Pakistani (2.0 per cent) or Bangladeshi (0.8 per cent)[158]. Another 0.6 per cent ticked the box "White and Asian".[159] Members of these categories have increased compared to the census data from 2001.[160] Overall, 14 per cent of the population are ethnic minorities including those 2.2 per cent who are in the category "mixed/multiple ethnic groups"[161], a rise compared to 2001. In addition, mixed households have increased: "There has been a rise in the percentage of households containing usual residents of more than one ethnic group. This includes, for example, households where partners or members of different generations are of different ethnic groups."[162]

In terms of religion, most Asians and British Asians identified themselves as Muslim.

> Pakistani Muslims formed the largest non-White ethnoreligious group in Great Britain, with a population of 686,000 people in 2001 […] The Pakistani population has a greater religious homogeneity than most ethnic groups; nine in ten Pakistanis (92 per cent) were classified as Muslim in the 2001 Census and most of the remainder were classified as Religion not stated (6 per cent). […] Bangladeshis have a similar religious profile with 92 per cent being classified as Muslim and 6 per cent as Religion not stated in 2001.[163]

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[156] Berg 2006: 269.
[157] Berg 2006: 268.
[158] Office for National Statistics. "2011 Census: Key Statistics for England and Wales, March 2011." 11 December 2012. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/stb-2011-census-key-statistics-for-england-and-wales.html (accessed 20 June 2013).
[159] Cf. ONS 2012: 10.
[160] This is a rise compared to 2001, when 1.8 per cent identified themselves as Indian, 1.3 per cent as Pakistani and 0.5 per cent as Bangladeshi. The box "White and Asian" did not exist yet, there was only one category of "Mixed" that was not further differentiated (cf. Office for National Statistics. "Focus on Ethnicity and Identity." March 2005. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ethnicity/focus-on-ethnicity-and-identity/index.html (accessed 3 October 2012).).
[161] ONS 2012: 10.
[162] ONS 2012: 11.
[163] Bosveld, Karin and Helen Connolly. "Population." *Focus On Ethnicity and Religion 2006.* Dobbs, Joy, Hazel Green and Linda Zealey (eds). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. 21.

Next to Islam, Sikhism and Hinduism were most common among Asians and British Asians, with the majority of Sikhs living in the West Midlands: 30,000 out of the total 94,000 people who identified themselves as Sikh[164].

Where in the UK do most Asians and British Asians live? Many live in the (former) industrial centres and London – because that is where they found the work (see above).

> Non-White ethnic groups are considerably more likely to live in England than in the other countries of the UK. […] The non-White population of the UK is concentrated in the large urban centres. Nearly half (45 per cent) lived in the London region in 2001, where they comprised 29 per cent of all residents. After London, the second largest proportion was in the West Midlands (with 13 per cent of the non-White population), followed by the South East (8 per cent), the North West (8 per cent), and Yorkshire and the Humber (7 per cent).[165]

An implication of this concentration in formerly industrial areas is a "strong ethnic segmentation of the local communities as the decline of the mills and factories also caused the disappearance of the most important contact zones (or in some cases even the only contact zones) between white and minority population."[166]

These are the most important historical events and demographic figures against which the novels chosen for this study are set and which are implicitly and explicitly referred to in the novels. For a more detailed history of migration, race relations and politics since 1945 (comprising all ethnic groups) see e.g. John Solomos book on *Race and Racism in Britain*.[167] And for a focus on South Asian immigration and settlement as well as discrimination and identity issues see Avtar Brah's *Cartographies of Diaspora. Contesting Identities*.[168]

Slowly but surely immigrants found access to all areas in Britain – and so immigrant authors and representations of immigrants, probably most famously Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* published in 1956, found entrance to the British literary field. The 1980s were a particularly productive, critically acclaimed and economically successful phase for British Asian authors, not least Salman Rushdie's Booker Prize winning novel *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988). *The*

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[164] Cf. ONS 2012: 7-8. The majority of the Census participants identified themselves as Christians: 33,243 or 59.3 per cent. The second largest group indicated no religion (14,097 people or 25.1 per cent), followed by 1,159,000 Muslims (4.8 per cent) and 264,000 Hindus (1.5 per cent) (cf. ibid.).
[165] ONS 2005: 3.
[166] Berg 2006: 259, my translation, S.v.L.
[167] Solomos, John. *Race and Racism in Britain*. 3rd edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
[168] Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora. Contesting Identities*. 1996. London: Routledge, 2010.

Satanic Verses caused outrage, violent protests and book burnings because some people chose to be offended – there was even a fatwa issued against the author. Among the representations of and by immigrants in Britain were many novels that deal with generational conflicts between immigrants and their British-born children. The focus was often on conflict and the creative potential of the characters' hybridity, most famously probably Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990).

Before I analyse the selected novels and their representations of cultural exchange in more detail, the next subchapter addresses the material and institutional conditions of production and reception – and their consequences – for contemporary novels in Britain.

3.2. The Literary Field in the UK: Happy Multicultural Land?

In addition to the content and form of the novel, the product design and responses by institutions such as literary prize committees and reviewers deserve a closer look. These aspects can have an impact on the overall reception and representation of a novel.

Some aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the literary field are helpful in this context. Bourdieu describes the literary field as a network of interconnected agents, such as authors, publishers, readers, academic institutions etc. He defines those people and institutions as members of the literary field who have an impact on the field: "There is no other criterion of membership of a field than the objective fact of producing effects within it."[169] This can be e.g. an author who writes and publishes a novel, literary prize committees awarding prizes, a book show influencing book sales etc. The literary field, according to Bourdieu, is a dynamic field in which its members struggle for recognition and power, e.g. the power to impose their interpretation of what legitimate cultural production is[170]. Bourdieu

[169] Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Field of Cultural Production." *The Book History Reader*. Finkelstein, David and Alistair McCleery (eds). 2nd edition. Milton Park: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2006. 100.

[170] Cf. Bourdieu 2006: 99. Bourdieu's theory of the literary field has been contested. The definition and distinction between the different kinds of capital Bourdieu mentions (social, cultural, symbolic, economic) has been criticised as imprecise. Also, as Bourdieu's theory and examples are based on a very specific geographic, cultural and time-specific context (i.e. 19th-century France), it is questionable whether one can transfer it to contemporary Britain without amendments. What I take from Bourdieu, however, is the idea of a whole field of connected agents that play a role in the production, distribution, reception and evaluation of novels. Furthermore, the struggle for commercial success and what this can entail in the production process will come up in the histories of production of the selected novels. For a thorough investigation and criticism of Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural production see: Born, Georgina. "The Social and the Aesthetic: For a Post-Bourdieuian Theory of Cultural Production." *Cultural Sociology* 4.2 (2010). 171-208, and Prior, Nick. "Critique

identifies three strategies that members in the field employ to claim recognition: one, recognition through admiration by other producers, e.g. by other authors; two, recognition through important institutions in the respective field, e.g. prize committees or academic institutions; three, recognition through sales and economic success.[171] These principles exist in competition with each other and a "key tension within the literary field" is produced by "the opposition between art and commerce"[172]. On the one hand, artists want to be acknowledged for their artistic work without having to think about whether it sells or not, but on the other hand, they need money to cover their living costs. Publishers need the sales, too, to survive in the market as they are businesses and usually not financed by patrons any more. This has, of course, an impact on their publishing decisions.

The situation of the contemporary book market is important in this context. Publishers act in a highly competitive market. Every year, approximately 160,000 new books are produced by UK publishers[173] and compete for readers' attention. In addition, the literary market in the UK has experienced concentration developments or 'conglomeration'. There are no longer large numbers of independent publishing houses which compete with each other but rather a few conglomerates who own a number of imprints. The so-called 'Big Four' are four big publishing conglomerates who had a market share of approximately 49 per cent (for print books) in 2011/2012: Hachette UK (15.2 per cent)[174], Random House (about 15 per cent)[175], Penguin (about 11 per cent)[176] and Harper Collins (7.9 per cent)[177]. Penguin and Random House have merged in 2013, which leaves even more market power in the hands of fewer people. This is relevant because the decisions about what to publish or not are

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and Renewal in the Sociology of Music: Bourdieu and Beyond." *Cultural Sociology* 5.1 (2011). 121-138.

[171] Cf. Bourdieu 2006: 105.

[172] Stedman, Gesa: "From Gentlemanly Publishing to Conglomerates: The Contemporary Literary Field in the UK." 2006. Eisenberg, Christiane, Rita Gerlach and Christian Handke (eds). *Cultural Industries: The British Experience in International Perspective.* Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Edoc-Server, 2006.

[173] The Nielsen Company, the most important provider of book market data in the UK, reported a production of 163,160 books in 2012. The Nielsen Company. *Nielsen releases book production figures for 2012*. Woking: The Nielsen Company, 26 March 2013. http://www.whitaker.co.uk/press.php?release_id=85 (accessed 24 July 2013).

[174] Cf. Williams, Charlotte. "'Slight' dip for Hachette UK in 2012." *The Bookseller* 07 February 2013. http://www.thebookseller.com/news/%E2%80%98slight%E2%80%99-dip-hachette-uk-2012.html (accessed 9 August 2013).

[175] Cf. "Penguin and Random House owners agree joint venture." *BBC News*. 29 October 2012. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20120485 (accessed 9 August 2013).

[176] Cf. ibid.

[177] Cf. Neill, Graeme. "Barnsley: Amazon and WHS key performers for HC." *The Bookseller* 3 November 2011. http://www.thebookseller.com/news/barnsley-amazon-and-whs-strongest-booksellers.html (accessed 9 August 2013).

thus made by a very small number of companies. This combined with the development of commercialisation can ultimately lead to less diversity in published books and market-censorship, i.e. that the decision about what to publish or not is based rather on their expectations to sell well than on other more quality-related criteria. This might not come as a big surprise as the publishing market is in fact a market with players who want to make profits and remain in business. However, publishing houses in particular still view themselves as 'gatekeepers'[178] of culture – a claim that invites a closer look at some of the celebrated works such as *Brick Lane*.

The market situation and the publishers' striving for a powerful position in the literary field influence how publishers decide which books they want to publish. While often struggling to find their position between producing art and making profit, publishers tend to become more risk averse, as the sociologist Anamik Saha's PhD thesis on "The Postcolonial Cultural Economy: The Politics of British Asian Cultural Production" shows. One of the results of the various interviews in the literary field he conducted was that publishers tend to attempt to "repeat past success" if one thing (e.g. a certain topic) worked well, instead of investing in unprecedented and more risky projects. This is how the editorial director who produced Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* describes his experience:

> For the next two years after [*The God of Small Things*] there was so many books that came in from people with mixed upbringings and experiences. So you'd get my fictionalised memoir of growing up Sri Lankan or being Philippino in New York. It's funny because the agents would send you the submission and it would say this could do what *The God of Small Things* did for you. Which is kind of interesting, the subtext there. The thing is it's not just true of race and nation – and nation is important too. Absolutely the same thing happened after *Angela's Ashes* – Frank McCourt – which is a bestselling memoir about growing up poor in Ireland. You got shitloads of Irish books through – *this could the next*…. People need boxes. […] What's scary now though is with BookScan, people probably will look up the sales figures through the tills for *Brick Lane* and for *The God of Small Things* and then will decide how much we should spend on a Gautam Malkani. That's pretty scary.[179]

The production history of Gautam Malkani's novel *Londonstani* will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4.3.2. An immensely popular tool in connection with this bandwagon effect is BookScan. It is a paid-for service provided by the Nielsen

[178] Cf. e.g. McCrum, Robert. "Publishing will always need its gatekeepers." *The Guardian* 1 March 2010. http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2010/mar/01/publishing-houses-editors (accessed 29 August 2013).
[179] Saha, Anamik. "The Postcolonial Cultural Economy: The Politics of British Asian Cultural Production." Dissertation. Goldsmith College, University of London, 2009. 126.

Company that allows publishers to track book sales by ISBN numbers.[180] Publishers can then look up how well a certain title or author 'performed' in the past and base future publishing decisions on this information.

This can lead to the above-mentioned bandwagon effect and become problematic for two main reasons: it aims at reproducing past successes instead of encouraging novels that are without matching precedent. This makes it harder for unconventional novels to be published. And secondly, it increases the risk that books are reduced to stereotypes and formulas, e.g. a reduction of *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane* to '(pretty) female and visibly mixed-ethnic British author writing about multicultural encounters'. In the quest for formulas that have worked before, market censorship might occur, i.e. the concentration on books that are more likely to sell big volume and the rejection of books that might be more difficult to sell. In the case of Maggie Gee's demanding novel dealing with middle-class racism, *The White Family*, this risk aversion has almost prevented its publication, as will be addressed in chapter 4.4.2.

In addition to the observed risk adversity, an increased spending on book marketing can be traced. Book marketing is relevant because marketing efforts position a novel in the literary field.[181] Book publishing scholar Claire Squires emphasizes that marketing is a "process of representation"[182]. The results of marketing decisions such as the design of book covers, blurbs and stickers, formats and prices represent the content of a novel to potential readers before they have had the chance to buy and/or read it. Thus, it invites suggestions about the novel, e.g. its genre and literary standard, and influences the buying and reading decision. This can be problematic if content and packaging do not match. *Londonstani*, for example, was redesigned after the original cover appealed to a different audience than the intended readership (for more details, please see chapter 4.2.2.). Furthermore, book

[180] According to Nielsen, they cover 35,000 book shops and online retailers in nine countries (cf. The Nielsen Company. *Nielsen BookScan.* Woking: The Nielsen Company, n.d. http://www.nielsenbookscan.co.uk/controller.php?page=48 (accessed 11 September 2013); The Nielsen Company. *What is Nielsen BookScan?* Woking: The Nielsen Company, n.d. http://www.nielsenbookscan.co.uk/uploads/WHAT%20IS%20NIELSEN%20BOOKSCAN.pdf (accessed 11 September 2013). Another Nielsen service, LibScan, offers information about the frequency of book borrowing. While this service needs to be paid for, a free review of the borrowing behaviour in the UK in 2012 can be accessed via *The Bookseller*: Tivnan, Tom. "Review of 2012: LibScan." *The Bookseller* 8 February 2013. http://www.thebookseller.com/feature/review-2012-libscan.html (accessed 31 July 2013).

[181] This is not only true for novels, but for any other books, too. However, as this thesis focuses on novels, I will concentrate on this category in the following.

[182] Squires, Claire. *Marketing Literature*. *The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain*. Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 101.

marketing can be complicit in 'orientalising' or 'exoticising' novels about migrants and their families in Britain if stereotypes that highlight differences are employed predominantly. While a certain reduction is always part of marketing as the message one wants to bring across needs to be communicated in very limited time and space, commercially motivated oversimplifications risk highlighting stereotypical features rather than more complex characteristics, which is particularly problematic in the case of politically charged topics and constellations. In the case of *Brick Lane*, e.g., Indian fabric patterns, a representation of a woman in a sari and food from the Subcontinent are used on the cover to evoke the 'exoticness' of the novel rather than the multicultural setting that is marked by exchange processes and that the novel takes its name from.

Literary prizes, reviews and other media coverage of novels can also have an impact on the reception. In the case of reviews it is interesting to see which elements where highlighted and which ones left out. Not only can this influence peoples' buying decisions, but also their overall interpretation and evaluation of a novel. Media coverage such as the mass of articles about the riots in Brick Lane that accompanied the screening attempts of the film adaptation of Monica Ali's novel may have similar effects.

Literary prizes entail what Pierre Bourdieu called institutional consecration and they often come with a sales boost. There are two ways in which this can be problematic.

The first one of these problematic points is linked to the act of consecration. Graham Huggan refers to Pierre Bourdieu when he underlines that the awarding of a prize always comes with a claim of the power to judge.[183] By accepting a prize, the awarded person accepts the committee's authority. The case of a series of Booker-awarded novels written by authors from former British colonies created controversies. On the one hand, the prize money came from a company who earned money through sugar cane plantations and slave labour, i.e. colonial exploitation. In addition to this direct link to an exploiting system that many of the awarded novels criticised, Graham Huggan also claims that the Booker Prize followed up on the former imperial hegemony with a "cultural-linguistic hegemony"[184]: eligibility for the prize was granted to all Commonwealth countries and some additional ones such as Pakistan, but judges and the chair remained representatives of the (mostly white)

[183] Cf. Huggan, Graham. "Prizing 'Otherness'". *Studies in the Novel* 29.3 (Fall 1997). 413.
[184] Ibid.: 426.

British establishment[185]. This way, it is still the 'old centre' that judges the former colonies.

On the other hand, Graham Huggan shares Gayatri Spivak's fear that by commodifying and institutionally consecrating what they call "marginality", institutions such as the Booker Prize could be complicit in a "new Orientalism"[186]. This means that if in the context of the award it is highlighted how 'different' Black British or British Asian writing is, it will contribute to a perpetuation of difference, of essentialism, of oppositions of 'us' and 'them.'

Secondly, the sales boost that often comes with the nomination for a prize or with winning one can also be problematic. Graham Huggan describes such an effect on the example of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. He claims that after the Booker Prize and the media attention, the novel became a mass market novel and was read and interpreted differently as a consequence, i.e. differently from the more intellectual audience it was intended for. While *Midnight's Children* offers hints that Saleem is not a reliable source and that historiography is always shaped by those who tell or write the stories, Salman Rushdie and Graham Huggan believe that the commercial success and institutional consecration that came with the Booker Prize "lent the novel a – perhaps unwanted – authority and imprimatur of the "authenticity" its authors apparently wished to disclaim."[187] Salman Rushdie is quoted by Huggan: "Ironically, the book's success – its Booker Prize, etc. – initially distorted the way in which it was read. Many readers wanted it to be history, even a guide-book, which it was never meant to be […]"[188]. *Brick Lane* and *Londonstani* have suffered from similar discussions circling around 'authenticity' and the authors' 'burden of representation' that came with nominations and media coverage. Interestingly, *Maps For Lost Lovers* was not received with so much protest against alleged 'misrepresentations' of Muslim communities and honour killings – quite probably because its highly artistic language and complicated constructions have brought along a different audience that does not look for 'authentic' accounts in works of fiction and is not a mass-market audience.

In the detailed analyses of my thesis which follow in the next chapters, I will look at the circumstances of the selected novels' production and reception, in

[185] Cf. ibid.: 418.
[186] Ibid.: 428.
[187] Ibid.: 423.
[188] Quoted in ibid.: 422.

particular the marketing efforts of the publisher and the publishing history where relevant as well as what reviews and the general media covered. I will also address in the respective sections those cases in which the consequence of the consecration through a specific prize was problematic for the selected novels.

4. Cultural Exchange in Selected Contemporary British Novels

4.1. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*: Cultural Exchange as Salvation

4.1.1. Plot and Author

The Plot

The novel starts with protagonist Nazneen's difficult birth in East Pakistan (which later becomes Bangladesh) in 1967. The main plot of the novel, however, is set in East London, in the area around Brick Lane. Nazneen moves there after her arranged marriage with the 40-year old Chanu when she is 18 years old. After their first born son Raqib dies before his first birthday, Nazneen and Chanu have two daughters, Shahana and Bibi.

While Chanu works at the local Council and completes a number of further education diplomas, Nazneen stays at home and keeps the "house". She does not know any English and her husband initially tries to keep her from learning it as well as from leaving the house. Throughout the novel, both Chanu and Nazneen undergo some changes: Nazneen learns English from her friend Razia and her daughters, starts to work as a seamstress and eventually becomes the family's only breadwinner. Trough her work as seamstress, Nazneen meets Karim, with whom she starts an affair. Karim was born and raised in Britain by his Bangladeshi father and becomes the leader of a protest group of Muslims. When Karim becomes increasingly radical and wants to turn Nazneen into someone she does not want to be, she breaks up with him.

Chanu, on the other hand, quits his job because he feels treated unfairly, cannot find an appropriate job and gets more and more frustrated. After Chanu cannot take what he perceives as discrimination and racism any more, he decides that the family is to return to Bangladesh. In order to do so, Chanu borrows money from Mrs Islam, a usurer as we find out later. Nazneen confronts this powerful criminal woman despite violent threats and thus regains their financial independence. In the end, Nazneen decides not to return to Bangladesh and stays in London with her two daughters.

The story about Nazneen and Chanu in London is interrupted several times by flashbacks into Nazneen's childhood and by letters from her sister Hasina, who stayed in Bangladesh and broke with her parents in order to marry the man she loves. When this marriage fails, Hasina faces a hard life as a single woman in Bangladesh, where she is discriminated against, beaten, exploited etc.

The Author: Monica Ali

Monica Ali was born in 1967 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and moved to the UK when she was still very young to escape the 1971 civil war.[189] She studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University and wrote her debut novel *Brick Lane* in 2003. More novels followed: *Alentejo Blue* (2006), which is set in Portugal and was less well received than Brick Lane; *In the Kitchen* (2009), which is rather a story about the contrast between North and South England and generational conflicts, but also includes some aspects of (illegal) immigration and the popular topic of chefs and restaurants; and *Untold Story* (2011), a book which examines the question what would have happened if Lady Di had survived. All of her books were published by Doubleday, an imprint of Random House when *Brick Lane* novel was published in 2003 (it is now an imprint of Penguin Random House).

Because of her Bangladeshi father, many comments on Ali's novel attempt to establish a link between her characters and stories and her own experience. In almost every review of *Brick Lane* one can find references to her origin, i.e. her Bangladeshi father and her English mother and her childhood spent in Dhaka. Also, reviews of her third novel *In the Kitchen* appear to be trying to link it back to *Brick Lane* – and its success – which allows them to contextualize it more easily than her second novel *Alentejo Blue* which is set in Portugal. Monica Ali wrote an article for the *Guardian* titled "Where I'm coming from" to voice her account of the story. But although she does not claim to be an "insider" and thus "know all about" the Bangladeshi community in London, she still uses her mixed ethnic heritage to claim a special position in the literary field. In this case, she claims to be an eternal outsider who, because of this status, is in a great position to observe things and write about them.

> Of course, any literary endeavour must be judged on the work alone. It stands or falls on its own merits regardless of the colour, gender and so on of the author. A male author does not need "permission" to write about a female character, a white author does not transgress in taking a black protagonist. But the "two camp" split in my case brings me back to the idea of the periphery. How can I write about a community to which I do not truly belong? Perhaps, the answer is I can write about it because I do not truly belong. Growing up with an English mother and a Bengali father means never being an insider. Standing neither behind a closed door, nor in the thick of

[189] Cf. Ziegler, Garrett. "East of the City: "Brick Lane", Capitalism, and the Global Metropolis." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 1.1 (2007). 147. www.jstor.org/stable/25594979 (accessed 15 June 2011). See also Kennedy, Maev. "In a Sense, if You Come Under Fire from those Conservative People, You Must be Doing Something Right." *The Guardian* 28 July 2006. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/jul/28/bookscomment.books (accessed 4 March 2008).

> things, but rather in the shadow of the doorway, is a good place from which to observe. Good training, I feel, for life as a writer. [190]

So in a way, she uses the same vocabulary as her critics (e.g. belonging and not belonging) instead of questioning these dichotomies or essentialist assumptions. Who is to decide who belongs and who does not? Those who protested against her novel and then later the film use similar concepts, just to a different result. In the following, I will examine *Brick Lane*'s history of publication and reception and explain about to the protests in the end.

4.1.2. History of Publication and Reception

After the success of Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, the manuscript of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* was very well received as a potentially equally successful novel on migration – even before its publication. *The Observer* commented: "When she was voted one of the UK's best young novelists Monica Ali's first book was only a manuscript. Now she's being hailed as a new Zadie Smith. [...] Monica Ali hasn't been published yet, but she is already famous."[191] She received a £300,000 publishing deal with Doubleday on the basis of the first five chapters and was named one of *Granta* magazine's Best Young British Novelists in 2003.[192]

Brick Lane was shortlisted for the 2003 Man Booker Prize for Fiction as well as the *Guardian* First Book Award and the Literary Fiction Award of the British Book Awards in the same year. *Brick Lane* received the Newcomer of the Year Award at the British Book Awards and the WH Smith People's Choice Award. It was reviewed in all major review channels and became a bestseller. As of 5 December 2012, according to Nielsen BookScan, *Brick Lane* had sold 857,651 copies.[193]

Cover, Title, Marketing

The cover of the Brick Lane paperback edition can serve as an example of what Graham Huggan calls "marketing the exotic"[194]: the letters are filled with fabric

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[190] Ali, Monica. "Where I'm Coming From." *The Guardian* 17 June 2003. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/jun/17/artsfeatures.fiction (accessed 14 June 2011).
[191] Lane, Harriet. "Ali's in Wonderland." *The Observer* 1 June 2003. http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,967855,00.html (accessed 4 March 2008).
[192] Cf. Kennedy 2006: 19.
[193] Cf. appendix.
[194] Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.

patterns, chillies and other 'ethnic food', a tattoo, peacock feathers and a Subcontinental dancer.

> In some ways the subtle use of exotica in the covers provides a visual representation of the liberal *multiculturalist* ideology that Rajeev [Balasubramanyam, a contemporary author] believes these books to represent[195]. Furthermore, it epitomises the commodification of race, as the potentially unsettling and convivial narratives of cultural entanglements contained within each novel are transformed through their book jackets into palatable, slightly exotic forms of hybridity. According to [the] account [of the editorial director at a major publishing house] the jackets of *Brick Lane* and *Londonstani* were based on a formula and aesthetic seen to have worked in the case of *White Teeth*.[196]

After the film was published, a film tie-in edition was created with a cover divided up into two parts: on the top part, actress Tannishtha Chatterjee looking back 'meaningfully', on the lower part, two girls playing in midst of sappy green grass and trees. The contrast between English city (London) and Bangladeshi countryside, Nazneen and her sister Hasina is established. The blurb which separates the two parts reads: "Now a major film" and "Brick Lane has everything: richly complex characters, a gripping story and it's funny too (*Observer*)".

Related to the marketing of the cover is the question of the title. Sarah Brouillette claims to know that Ali planned to call the novel *Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, supposedly as a reference to the distance between England and Bangladesh which also those readers who are not familiar with Brick Lane could understand.[197] According to Brouillette, the novel's publisher tried to exploit the "renewed interest in the area [...which] was then undergoing a substantial transformation":

> It was Doubleday, Ali's UK publisher, who preferred and pushed the title *Brick Lane*, knowing that a key to capture audiences for the novel would be

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[195] "Rajeev defines such novels as big works of literary fiction that are complicit with a certain white, liberal, middle-class attitude towards multiculturalism – not too subversive, but featuring enough of what Stuart Hall would describe as *a bit of the other*." (Saha, Anamik. "The Postcolonial Cultural Economy: The Politics of British Asian Cultural Production." Dissertation. Goldsmith College, University of London, 2009. 192.)

[196] Saha 2009: 193.

[197] Cf. Brouillette, Sarah. "Literature and Gentrification on Brick Lane." *Criticism* 51.3 (2009). 439. Although I find this story credible, I have no other proof for this negotiation of the title than Brouillette's account. In addition, I found the following publication *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylhetti Settlers in Britain*, which is compiled and edited by Caroline Adams (London, Tower Hamlets Arts Project, 1988). This publication refers to a "semi-legend about Britain, the land 'across seven seas and thirteen rivers', inhabited by rich, lordy people – a place where 'gold fell from the trees'." ("Book Reviews: Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylhetti Settlers in Britain. Compiled and Edited by Caroline Adams (London, Tower Hamlets Arts Project, 1988." *Race & Class* 31.1 (1989). 87.). In *Brick Lane*, Chanu refers to his family writing begging letters to make him send money back home and he accuses them of thinking that in Britain "there is gold lying about in the streets" (*BL*: 35). So it is at least possible that Monica Ali attempted to make a reference to the 1988 art project.

> through reference to its status as the first important work dealing with an increasingly visible community at the revitalized heart of a once-notorious area.[198]

But even those readers who criticise *Brick Lane* and Monica Ali sharply cannot help but realise that her "exotic foreign name" leads the "middle-class intelligentsia"[199] to read *Brick Lane* in a certain way, often as an authentic account of life in Banglatown. I would like to attribute this kind of reading more to the publisher or the critics – and less to an encouragement by the author or the text – because publishers and critics did not stop to mention her Bangladeshi father and her family history. Susanne Cuevas points out a problem that many social realist novels have when they explore marginal spaces of British cities:

> The 'authenticity' discourse continues to play an important role in the marketing of both novels and films set in social environments which are prone to clichéd representation. [...] demands for 'authenticity" and its limiting effects show, ethnic minority artists continue to struggle with 'the burden of racial representation', i.e. the assumption that they should produce both accurate and uplifting portraits of black and Asian British experience. [...] By casting authors like Newland and Ali in the role of a community spokesperson, publishers and the media disregard the heterogeneity of experiences which exist within such ethnic communities – which is exactly one of the points made by the authors in their 'council estate fictions'.[200]

For the sake of marketing and sales, essentialist and stereotypical notions of cultures, identities and communities try to sneak in through the back door, even though the novels might attempt to create a more multifaceted picture. Whether this is also the case for *Brick Lane* will be discussed in the following section.

Yasmin Alibhai-Brown highlights another important aspect: there seems to be a trend to publish and market a very specific kind of "ethnic writer", and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown refrains from celebrating *Brick Lane* as a success to give a certain marginalized group (female migrants from Bangladesh) a voice. Instead she sees that this kind of celebrating diversity is complicit in the old game of struggling for power: "Maybe it is envy, maybe it is incurable cynicism, but most black and Asian Britons are both delighted and wary – always wary of the system and how skilfully it

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[198] Brouillette 2009: 439.

[199] Curtis, David. "Letters." *The Guardian* 6 December 2003. http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2003/dec/06/guardianletters3 (accessed 14 June 2011).

[200] Cuevas, Susanne. "'Societies Within': Council Estates as Cultural Enclaves in Recent Urban Fiction." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts.* Eckstein, Lars, Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker and Christoph Reinfandt (eds). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 393-394.

maintains the status quo. […] Diversity is all about boxes, labels, niches, marketing, patronage and trepidation too."[201]

> Ali is a gifted storyteller, and Syal and others say they love the book. But is she part of a new breed of preferred "ethnic" writers? Is it impertinent to ask whether it is a coincidence that Zadie Smith, Hari Kunzru and now Ali are all mixed race, au fait with Oxbridge, not too dark or troublingly alien? They write compellingly because they inhabit and embody spaces between nations, cultures and continents. Countless others with talent who don't have that favoured profile live in the shadows.[202]

Protests

Next, I will have a closer look at the reception of the novel *Brick Lane* and the protests in particular. A number of protesters were said to oppose a commodification of the area that they themselves would like to brand according to their own ideas: the Greater Sylhet Development and Welfare Council (GSC), for example, attempted to brand the area around Brick Lane as an enclave celebrating a distinct idea of Bangladeshi identity (defined by them)[203] and "attempt to delimit who projects images of the area."[204]

The main protest against the novel (2003) and later the film adaptation (2006) – when the producers tried to shoot scenes in the original Brick Lane – appears to be organised by people who felt misrepresented and humiliated. However, it appears that the protests were blown up by the media. There were e.g. rumours about planned book burnings, but they turned out to be made up, possibly in order to encourage a comparison between *Brick Lane* and the *Satanic Verses*, the novel by Salman Rushdie that led to protests and book burnings, e.g. in Bradford. "Assurances were given by local businessman and protest organiser Abdus Salique that the widely-reported plans to burn copies of the book were incorrect."[205] And Peter Florence, director of the Brick Lane film adaptation added:

> It's not remotely comparable with the reaction to The Satanic Verses, but there is the same feeling of people who haven't read the book insisting that it does not say what they believe should be said, or that it does say what they regard as unspeakable. In a sense if you come under fire from those

[201] Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin. "The Curse of Diversity." *The Independent* 9 July 2003. http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/yasmin-alibhai-brown/the-curse-of-diversity-586197.html (accessed 14 June 2011).
[202] Alibhai-Brown 2003.
[203] Cf. Brouillette 2009: 435.
[204] Brouillette 2009: 433.
[205] Cacciottolo, Mario. "Brick Lane Protesters Hurt Over 'Lies'." *BBC News* 31 July 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/5229872.stm (accessed 13 May 2011).

> conservative people, you must be doing something right.[206]

So what where the reasons behind the protests?

> […] some local Bangladeshis claim the novel insults them specifically, by being named after the street in which they live and work. They say Ms Ali portrays Bangladeshis as uneducated and unsophisticated, and repeatedly mention a passage which they say has Bangladeshis coming over to England in the hold of a ship and with lice in their hair.[207]

It is in fact the character Chanu who describes his fellow Bangladeshis along these lines (cf. 28[208]). However, at this point in the novel, he is neither represented as a likable nor a trustworthy character. Some more quotations from protesters will reveal the subtext of the criticism:

> Dr Husain [one of the organisers of the protest] delivered a short speech in which he explained how the Bangladeshi community felt about Ms Ali's novel. "A book has been written, that has greatly offended the hard-working, industrious Bangladeshi community," he said. "This hard-working community has been offended by lies, slander and cynicism. There should be a limit to what you can write or say. You can write fiction, but you cannot use names that are reality. The reality is Brick Lane."[209]

> Mahmoud Roug, chairman of the Brick Lane Business Association, said the community hoped to prevent filming. […] "The book is a good work of literature, but is insulting to the community," said Mr Roug. "Monica Ali does not belong to the community. She has written a book that is just guesswork."[210]

The key points of criticism were: there are factual errors, the novel is insulting, not true and she got it wrong. [211] The protesters' accusations could also be summarized in this comment by Abdus Salique, quoted by *The Guardian*: "She is not one of us, she has not lived with us, she knows nothing about us, but she has insulted us."[212] The subtext is that novels have to mirror reality faithfully and that only "insiders" are allowed to write about certain topics. This also implies that an authentic account exists. Such a notion goes back to essentialist ideas about culture and identity. Those

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[206] Kennedy 2006.
[207] Cacciottolo 2011.
[208] The page numbers in this thesis refer to the 2004 edition of *Brick Lane* published by Black Swan: Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane*. London: Black Swan, 2004. The title *Brick Lane* is abbreviated to *BL*.
[209] Cacciottolo 2011.
[210] "Brick Lane 'Fury' Over Film Plans." *BBC News* 18 July 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/5190990.stm (accessed 13 May 2011).
[211] Cf. Cacciottolo 2011; Brouillette 2009: 440-441; "Brick Lane 'Fury' Over Film Plans." and Lea, Richard and Paul Lewis. "'Insulted' Residents and Traders Threaten to Halt Filming of Bestselling Novel Brick Lane." *The Guardian* 18 July 2006. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/jul/18/film.media (accessed 14 June 2011).
[212] Lea *et al.* 2006.

who defended Ali, on the other side, also took part in the same misleading discussion: "If Monica Ali wants to write about Brick Lane, which as a Bangladeshi she presumably knows a good deal about, then she should be free to do so."[213] Her family history has nothing to do with what she knows and again, who says that one has to know a lot about a topic in order to imagine a story around it?

Blown up or not, the subtext and discussion about 'authenticity' and legitimacy remain. It may not be fruitful for a literary analysis. However, it is part of many novels' reception context. If there should be a limit to what you can write or say, who is to draw the line? So far, we have come across market censorship undertaken by the publishing houses of novels published in the UK in the 21st century, which is already bad enough. The artistic freedom of contemporary British authors whose writing includes ethnic minority characters is limited. Who has an interest in limiting their artistic freedom? Does the postcolonial context play a role? Should it? The following analysis of the novel will identify, among other things, some of its provocative potential. The main focus, however, remains on the representation of cultural transfer processes and processes of change.

4.1.3. Analysis of the Representation of Cultural Exchange

4.1.3.1. Time and Space

The novel starts in the year 1967 with Nazneen's birth in Bangladesh. The main action, however, takes place in 1985, 2001 and 2002. After Nazneen's birth, the narrations jumps to a couple of months in 1985 (starting as early as page 17), later to 2001 (cf. 178) and ultimately to a couple of months in 2002. The terrorist attacks on 9/11 mark an important date for the action, in particular as the novel represents different reactions to the attacks and the following Islamophobia in the UK[214]. Further contextual references are the migration of many Bangladeshi people to the UK in the 1980s, the UK's treatment of these immigrants, references to Thatcher's spending cuts (cf. 42) and to the incidents in Bradford, to name just the most relevant ones. Surprisingly, the war in which Bangladesh fought for its independence from Pakistan (1971) does not feature in the novel.

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[213] Novelist and Booker Prize judge DJ Taylor quoted in: Taylor, Matthew. "Brickbats Fly as Community Brands Novel 'Despicable'". *The Guardian* 3 December 2003. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2003/dec/03/books.arts (accessed 15 June 2011).

[214] Some mothers do not let their daughters wear hijabs any more because they fear they could be beaten up by racists (cf. 376) and Razia gets spit on her Union Jack shirt (cf. 368). Some characters try to keep a low profile as a reaction to the Islamophobia and racist attacks. Karim, on the other hand, becomes increasingly radical (cf. 376).

The majority of the scenes in *Brick Lane* are set in Tower Hamlets in London, an area near Brick Lane, Spitalfields and Bethnal Green. The area has traditionally been a settling place for migrants from different regions of the world, such as the Huguenots in the 17th century, Jews fleeing from persecution in Russia in the late 19th and from all over Europe in the 20th century, Chinese immigrants later on and Bangladeshi immigrants from the 1980s on[215]. Because of its large Bangladeshi community, the area is often referred to as "Banglatown". In addition to being a residential area for many immigrants and people looking for cheap rent, Brick Lane and its surroundings have also become attractive to tourists: city guides praise it as an 'authentically exotic' space with many curry houses, spices, exotic clothes etc.[216] Sarah Brouillette claims that the cheap rents attracted avant-garde artists and intellectuals who in turn transformed the area into a popular area for tourists and Londoners alike – thus even (unintentionally) helping to gentrify the area.[217] To a UK-audience (and possibly also those who are familiar with London), the title "Brick Lane" and the setting in Tower Hamlets evoke bustling streets filled with Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi shops and restaurants, Jewish delis, trendy and overpriced second hand stores and a multicultural area in transition from run-down immigrant or working-class quarters to the next 'place to be'.

There are even allusions to the touristic element of Brick Lane and the gentrification process in the novel: a couple wants to have a 'real curry experience' on Brick Lane but they cannot enter because of the riots (cf. 470), and restaurants are putting on a show in order to attract customers (cf. 446). The tourists are made fun of because they do not understand the dangerous situation but are disappointed because they do not get their "curry and lager" and keep nagging the police with inappropriate gastronomic questions. However, the touristic and gastronomic sector plays an important role in the area. It is after all an industry in which many immigrants work in the UK – probably because of the possibility to employ unskilled workers for a variety of tasks, but also because of the fairly recent interest in "ethnic food". In *Brick Lane*, we encounter "[s]hops that sold fish and chips and samosas and

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[215] Cf. Gavron, Jeremy. "Brick Lane, Home to the Persecuted." *The Telegraph* 28 December 2005. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1506432/Brick-Lane-home-to-the-persecuted.html (accessed 1 September 2012). See also: Lichtenstein, Rachel. *On Brick Lane*. London: Penguin, 2008.

[216] In addition, the development of the Docklands (which started in 1974, although the first buildings opened around the 1990s), improved public transportation, and the transformation of nearby Spitalfield market into a popular space for creative industries and tourism may have also affected the change of the Brick Lane area.

[217] Cf. Brouillette 2009: 430.

pizzas and a little bit of everything from around the world" (100), but also a restaurant in Brick Lane with statues of Hindu gods. When Nazneen expresses her surprise – after all, in the novel it is an area with a mainly Muslim population – Chanu explains: "Not Hindus. Marketing. Biggest god of all." (446) And the narrator continues: "The white people liked to see the gods" (446), as Chanu remarks, "for authenticity" (446). A humorous side blow at the authenticity craze and 'marketing the exotic' trend.

In addition, Nazneen observes tourists observing her through their "impressive camera" (254). The female tourist "pointed the camera at Nazneen. Nazneen adjusted her headscarf. She was conscious of being watched." (254) However, we learn that Nazneen is not upset by the touristic gaze but by the fact that she feels watched by "angels, who recorded every action and thought, good and evil, for the Day of Judgement" (254). Her religious upbringing and her bad conscience because of her affair with Karim are shown to be responsible for her paranoia.

The change of the face of the area is represented above all through Nazneen's eyes. The first impressions are depressing. The area is marked by decay, grey colours and interdictions (cf. 17-18 and 64). Although there are still some areas in which the houses seem desolate Nazneen admires the "smart restaurants" with "starched white tablecloths and multitudes of shining silver cutlery. [...] The tables were far apart and there was an absence of decoration that Nazneen knew to be a style. [...] A very large potted fern or a blue and white mosaic at the entrance indicated ultra-smart." (252) Nazneen also observes remodelled houses and people working outside with their laptops (cf. 253). Chanu is mocking the luxury: "'Seventy-five pounds for that little bag. You couldn't fit even one book in it.' Outside a café he paused again. 'Two pounds ninety for a large coffee with whipped cream.'" (253)

The community in Tower Hamlets is represented as almost entirely Bangladeshi, mostly from Sylhet (cf. 28). However, the inhabitants of Tower Hamlets are far from being a homogeneous group. The novel highlights differences in age, class, gender, ideology and religious conviction – and also makes a difference between those who were born in Britain and those who came from Bangladesh.

The second main setting is Bangladesh, in particular a little town in the Mymensingh District where Nazneen and Hasina grew up – as we learn from the narrator –, but also other cities including Dhaka, where Hasina lives for a long time as a servant to a rich family. Bangladesh serves as a location for Nazneen's

childhood memories, stories she used to be told, but also Hasina's present day experiences.

The two settings, London and the Mymensingh District or respectively Dhaka, are rich in contrast. The difference between the lively, colourful and humorous description of her village and the grey and dull portrayal of Nazneen's view from her window in London shows how the sympathies are distributed initially: on the one side, in Bangladesh, we have "children playing" (11), the "scent of fried cumin and cardamom" (12), mango trees and wide green fields. On the other side, in England, we have "dead grass", "broken paving stones", and the smell from communal bins (18). Even later on, Nazneen's chosen home appears grey and hostile. Negative descriptions prevail, such as the "sick orange light of a lamppost" (468), "a desolate building" (468), and "children [...] behind bars" (468).[218] At first, the parts about Bangladesh are much more vivid, there are more descriptions of the surroundings, more colours, more senses (cf. e.g. 127) – and they are above all: positive. When Nazneen cannot take it anymore, when she feels "trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity" (76), she closes her eyes and tries to evoke Bangladesh in her mind. She then "smelled the jasmine that grew close to the well, heard the chickens scratching in the hot earth, felt the sunlight that warmed her cheeks and made dancing patterns on her eyelids." (76)

However, Bangladesh is a place Nazneen longs to go back to until she actually has to. After some time, she stops idealizing Goripour and thinks instead of the inconveniences such as non-flushable toilets (cf. 77). The longer she stays in London, the harder it becomes for her to evoke these memories.

> The village was leaving her. Sometimes a picture would come. Vivid; so strong she could smell it. More often, she tried to see and could not. It was as if the village was caught up in a giant fisherman's net and she was pulling at the fine mesh with bleeding fingers, squinting into the sun, vision mottled with netting and eyelashes. As the years passed the layers of netting multiplied and she began to rely on a different kind of memory. The memory of things she knew but no longer saw. (217)

In addition, Nazneen realized pretty early on that she did not necessarily want to go back to Bangladesh but to the carefree state of being a child again: "by now she knew that where she wanted to go was not a different place but a different time." (45)

[218] However, Nazneen's perception of her surroundings is also connected to her inner state. When she is looking for her runaway daughter or when she feels trapped inside her flat, Nazneen's descriptions are much more dire than her experience of the ice rink in the end.

So it is made explicit that she is idealizing her memories and that there is no going back.

Furthermore, Hasina's letters, comments by the narrator and Nazneen's later perspectives rectify the nostalgic representations of Bangladesh. They describe Bangladesh as a country with a harsh climate, e.g. tornados (17), and many inconveniences (cf. 77).[219] Additional representations of the country are linked to Chanu. He studied at Dhaka University and returns to the capital when he leaves London. His memory-version of Bangladesh remains highly idealized for a long time. He frequently resorts to literature, particularly poetry, and history in order to teach his daughters about his country of origin. When Chanu returns, Nazneen can hear the disappointment in his voice when they talk on the phone. His move to Bangladesh has probably forced him to adjust his idea of his home country. In addition, just like in England, his projects are not successful.

Migration and Contact Zones

Tower Hamlets, where the story is set, is filled with migrants. In *Brick Lane*, readers are confronted with various instances of forced and voluntary migration. The various forms of migration that are represented resist generalising comments.

Nazneen, for example, came to London through an arranged marriage. Her father chose her husband and Nazneen was forced to move to England. Nazneen's case illustrates that migration is not always a choice and it is not an easy experience. In the case of some children on Brick Lane, the migration experience is even called a trauma. However, the following quotation implies that there is hope, i.e. that the migrants can overcome their suffering: "Nazneen had learned to recognize the face of a refugee child: that traumatised stillness, the need they had, to learn to play again." (468) Despite the forced nature of her initial migration, Nazneen decides to stay in England. "When she [Nazneen] had come she had learned first about loneliness, then about privacy, and finally she learned a new kind of community." (182) I would like to emphasize the employed term "learned" in this context, hinting at a process of cultural (ex)change. The new environment and Nazneen's isolation make her unhappy at first. Nazneen does not know how to cope with this new context. Through the contact with other characters, e.g. mediators such as Razia and

[219] The "sun is red like a hell" (173) and the inhabitants "long for rain" (173). The mortality rate for children is high (cf. 145), there is a lot of corruption (cf. 162f.) and women are discriminated against (cf. e.g. 155-162).

Nazneen's daughters, Nazneen learns about the new opportunities she has. Nazneen starts to question the patriarchal system, gains more self-confidence and finally makes her own decisions.

In contrast to Nazneen, Chanu migrated to the UK voluntarily, but decides to leave London in the end. Chanu came to England to earn money and return a rich man (cf. 34). However, his university education from the University of Dhaka in English literature is not acknowledged in London. According to Chanu, this problem, as well as the racism of his superiors, prevent him from getting a proper job in the UK. So Chanu returns to Bangladesh, but even there he does not find a job that corresponds with his education.

Returning to Bangladesh is yet another act of migration and a popular topic among some of the characters. In the beginning, Chanu mocks those immigrants who want to return to their home country. He criticises that those immigrants never even attempt to fit in with their host culture (cf. 32). Dr Azad says about the "Going Home Syndrome" (32) that those who plan to go home can never earn enough money and thus stay in Britain. This is a prolepsis on Chanu's later situation, i.e. the long time in which the family tries to save money but never quite has enough. Dr Azad speaks about his own plans of returning, but explains his hesitation with floods, tornados and other catastrophes that have kept him from leaving London every time he considered moving (cf. 33).

Shahana and Bibi are almost forced to move to Bangladesh. In their case this would not be "going home" as Chanu calls it, but moving to a foreign country. Chanu says about Shahana: "[s]he is only a child, and already the rot is beginning. That is why we must go." (182) By 'rot' he refers to her answering back, refusing to recite Bengali poetry, and preferring jeans over kameez (cf. 180ff.). In the end, however, Shahana and Bibi stay in the UK and Chanu goes home alone. Both girls, Shahana in particular, do not want to move to Bangladesh. It is implied that Nazneen does not want her daughters to live in Bangladesh either because she does not want them to be indoctrinated the way she was when she was young. Nazneen does not want her daughters to live in a patriarchal and misogynist society, but she wants them to enjoy the opportunities of a life in England.

Brick Lane also shows different reactions or strategies to deal with migration and the question of assimilation. While characters such as Chanu and Mrs Islam express their fear of losing their culture, others such as Mrs Azad feel comfortable to

appropriate elements of British culture and even assimilate to some extent. There is also a generational divide: the younger characters such as Karim recognize their English as well as their Bengali heritage. Interestingly, Karim emphasizes his Englishness in the beginning[220], but after the atmosphere becomes increasingly racist after 9/11, Karim stresses his Bengali and Muslim background.

Chanu talks about the "immigrant tragedy" (113), which is in his opinion a clash of cultures.[221] "I'm talking about the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's own identity and heritage. I'm talking about children who don't know what their identity is. I'm talking about the feelings of alienation engendered in a society where racism is prevalent." (133) The readers know that Chanu exaggerates. His daughters are not represented as confused. It is rather that Chanu simply does not like what his daughters have come up with, in particular in Shahana's case. Mrs Azad, who is represented as a rude and rather repulsive character[222], contradicts Chanu:

> Crap! [...] Assimilation this, alienation that! Let me tell you a few simple facts. Fact: we live in a Western society. Fact: our children will act more and more like Westeners. Fact: that's not a bad thing. My daughter is free to come and go. Do I wish I had enjoyed myself like her when I was young? Yes! (113)

Mrs Azad also explains that she adapts to the local norms when she is in Bangladesh – such as wearing a sari and covering her head (cf. 114). Alistair Cormack interprets Chanu and Mrs Azad as representatives of a particular notion of culture:

> In terms of morality of the novel, Chanu and Mrs Azad stand accused of orienting themselves by cultures perceived as static and monolithic. They maintain what Bhabha would describe as a notion of cultural "diversity" […] – that is, a metaphysical belief in conflicting and competing cultural essences to which one may remain loyal or, alternatively, to which one may assimilate.[223]

I found it annoying and simplistic, though, that the characters in *Brick Lane* mirror some of the main and already discussed 'arguments' in the debates on migration, integration and identity so blatantly. As both characters are not among those characters the readers are invited to identify with, this can be read as a statement

[220] England is 'his country' (cf. 212), he sees himself as an English citizen and speaks much better English than Bengali.
[221] "I'm talking about the clash between Western values and our own." (113)
[222] Although Nazneen is said to feel affection for her, Mrs Azad is still loud and vulgar. Mrs Azad wears a "short purple skirt [...,] her thighs tested the fabric" (106) and adjusts "her underwear with a thumb, and a wiggle of her opulent backside." (108) She smokes and drinks and belches (cf. 106-109).
[223] Cormack, Alistair. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form: Realism and the Postcolonial Subject in Brick Lane." *Contemporary Literature* 47.4 (2006). 704.

against such an understanding of culture. This supports an understanding also provided by cultural transfer theory, i.e. that cultures are entangled in dynamic exchange processes and never static or 'pure'.

It is interesting, though, that some of the characters seem so preoccupied with their fear of assimilation, when there is so little contact with other cultures in *Brick Lane*. The vast majority of the scenes is set on Nazneen's and Chanu's estate. The represented community is a segregated community with strong unwritten rules and permanent social control by other people from the community. The inhabitants are almost exclusively Bangladeshi with the exception of the tattoo lady, a member of the lower classes, and an alcoholic. There are not so many contact zones for people from different ethnic groups. The novel emphasizes division rather than contact.

Nevertheless, there is some contact between the inhabitants of the Brick Lane area and white British characters. These contacts take place in public spaces, in particular on the street, in restaurants and at school. At school, the contact is limited to the younger characters, the so-called second generation. Although there is only little information about school, many adult characters complain that their children are 'westernized' – referring to disobedience and different tastes concerning clothes and music (cf. e.g. 126). The parents blame their children's teachers and schoolmates. The family can also serve as a contact zone in a sense: in Nazneen's family home, e.g., objects and practices from different cultures come together. The characters act as mediators and bring those objects and practices along without serving automatically as a representative of a different culture.

Tourism provides another opportunity for contact, even though the represented results of this contact are of a rather commercial nature. However, the touristic gaze is represented from two angles in *Brick Lane*. Chanu and Nazneen go sightseeing themselves. The whole family goes to visit places they usually do not go to, such as Buckingham Palace. In a humorous scene they meet an American tourist and are taken for tourists themselves (cf. 296). The trip is organised by Chanu as a "family holiday" (290) and sightseeing trip, emphasizing the discovery of something alien and Chanu's understanding of himself as a 'guest' in the UK. For Shahana, on the other hand, London is home. [224]

In addition to these rather positive or at least neutral contact zones and situations, there are also representations of racism in *Brick Lane*. Those on the job

[224] When asked where they are from, Chanu answers: "Bangladesh" – which the American locates in India – and Shahana: "London".

market, such as Chanu, try to compete with white people and are thus confronted with individual and institutional racism on a regular basis. As many female characters are forbidden to work by their husbands or fathers, they do not experience racism related to their work.[225] Nazneen encounters hostile people in the streets: the white women she sees in passing whisper and talk about Nazneen when looking at her (cf. 43), "their mouths worked furiously" (43). At least this is how Nazneen perceives it.

While the segregation and lack of contact zones is represented as a reason for a lack of cultural exchange, one can witness a particular kind of cultural transfer. The inhabitants of the Dogwood Estate have transferred their social and religious practices to their new living quarters. The men in the represented community impose many restrictions on their wives and daughters. A separate spheres ideology is imposed: women are to stay at home, raise the children, cook and clean, while men work to support the family. If a woman works herself, this is frowned upon by the community.[226] Chanu accuses the immigrants of never really arriving in the UK in their hearts and "recreating the villages here" (32), turning a little patch of England into a Bangladeshi village.[227] Chanu sees himself as more progressive: "I am westernized now. It is lucky for you that you married an educated man." (45) However, the readers learn that he is very selective in his 'westernized' behaviour. Chanu keeps Nazneen from learning English (cf. 77) and even demands that she stays at home in the beginning:

> 'Why should you go out?' said Chanu. 'If you go out, then people will say, "I saw her walking on the street." And I will look like a fool. Personally, I don't mind if you go out but these people are so ignorant. What can you do?' She never said anything to this. (45)

Nazneen slowly develops strategies to escape her confinement: at first, they consist mostly of daydreaming (above all about Bangladesh), watching ice skating[228], citing mantras, calming her mind with repetitions, in particular religious texts (e.g. with a tasbee, the Muslim equivalent of a rosary). One cannot help but think of the "opium

[225] Cf. Cuevas 2008: 390.
[226] The fear of 'what the others might say' if somebody does not comply with the rules is omnipresent and serves as a mechanism for social control (see more in section 4.1.3.3.).
[227] Whenever Nazneen attempts to convince Chanu to invite Hasina to come to London to save her life or at least make it easier for her, Chanu accuses her of trying to "[m]ake a little village here." (183)
[228] Ice skating appears magical to Nazneen when she sees it for the first time (cf. 36), then she finds it queer and inappropriate (too much naked skin, male hands where they should not be), then she refuses to watch it because she feels she has to accept her fate and not dream of escape, and finally, in the end, Nazneen goes ice skating herself (cf. 492). This is described to the reader as a liberating experience.

of the people" statement when Nazneen pulls out the Qur'an and recites words she does not understand but knows will calm her. Later on, she goes out alone or with friends, refuses to eat with the others, leaves the house and then the Brick Lane area on her own and finally starts to work (sewing at home) and learns English.

At a first glance, Tower Hamlets, where most of the story is set, is entirely in the hands of the Bangladeshi community. In a number of passages, however, it becomes clear that the space is contested. A group of white British racists, the Lion Hearts, distribute leaflets with xenophobic contents. The Bengal Tigers are a group of non-white inhabitants of the Brick Lane area who want to find strategies to deal with this racism. While some members want to exchange ideas about peaceful forms of living together in the same area, others aim to reclaim the streets and make a mark.[229] Some of the Bengal Tigers write and distribute their own leaflets in reaction to the Lion Hearts' mail shots. This means of communication and position claiming, however, is made fun of by Chanu and the narrator.

As the novel progresses, some members of the Bengal Tigers become increasingly radical and a festival, and their "march against the march against the mullahs" ends in a street fight. A march is a highly visible form of claiming the streets. However, in this case, it is ridiculed because it ends in disaster and the conflict that emerges has nothing to do with the political agenda of the march. It turns into some gang war (revenge), and some community members complain that these few trouble makers ridicule the whole community and fuel stereotypical media coverage. They are proven right: reporters run around in search of sensation, attempting to make a catchy story out of the riots (cf. 485).

At first glance, some positive consequences result from the riots: as a reaction to the violence and in order to prevent further 'outbreaks', the council repairs the estate's Youth Centre and the police starts to fight drug trading and drug abuse on the estate (cf. 484)[230]. Even a "Tower Hamlets Task Force was established to look into Youth Deprivation and Social Cohesion. In two years' time it would deliver its verdict." (485) However, at a closer look, this is deeply ironic. First of all, violent riots were necessary in order to draw attention to the area and get things moving.

[229] In addition to the 'leaflet war' and the march, the 'graffiti war' is another sign of the streets being contested spaces: "Someone had written in careful flowing silver spray over the wall, *Pakis*. And someone else, in less beautiful but confident black letters, had added, *Rule*." (236)

[230] However, it is left unanswered whether the police's fight was successful in the long run. The narrator remarks: "Three dealers were arrested. Job opportunities opened up." (485) It is left open whether these three positions need to be filled by new dealers or whether new jobs were created. The ironic tone of this whole section suggests the former interpretation.

Second, it is doubtful if anything will ever happen at all. The task force only "looks" at the situation and does not actually do anything. And their final result is a "verdict" and not a solution. In two years' time, it is too late for many of the concerned teenagers anyway. In another passage, Nazneen makes a similar comment about the distribution of attention: when nobody seems to notice her, she thinks they would only see her if she were waving a gun (cf. 56). In a way, the passages above function as an invitation to question mechanisms and representations in the media – and this can also be linked to the media coverage of the protests against the book and the film (see section on "History of Publication and Reception" aboveg).

4.1.3.2. Narrative Transmission and Characters

An analysis of the characterisation techniques and the narrative transmission in relation to cultural exchange in *Brick Lanes* is productive. A closer look at the inventory as well as the constellations and characterisations can reveal mediators – but also obstacles to cultural exchange processes. The narrative transmission in *Brick Lane* provides insights into the assessment of contact and (ex)change as well as the reasons for their rejection.

In relation to modes of narrative transmission, it is interesting to find out who gets most "air time" and how the sympathy of the readers is steered. *Brick Lane* has an omniscient third-person narrator. The main character in *Brick Lane* is Nazneen. As she functions as a focaliser most of the time, her perspective takes up the majority of the narrative space. Much time and effort is spent to make readers feel compassion or at least empathy by focusing on Nazneen's thoughts and feelings, by unveiling injustice etc. The clear focus on Nazneen and her "reward" in the end also supports a didactic message stating that work, language training and the rejection of strict social and religious conventions lead to empowerment, emancipation and happiness. Those characters who promote traditional Bangladeshi conventions are portrayed in a rather negative way, e.g. Chanu (at first) and Mrs Islam. Characters who break free of religious and social constraints such as Nazneen and Razia are depicted more positively and in more detail (see below).

The narrator's narrative is at times interrupted by memory sequences (Nazneen looking for consolation and explanations for her present situation) and Hasina's letters, which serve to contrast the events and circumstances of life in London and Bangladesh and provide additional information on Nazneen's life that

the narrator or Nazneen do not share with the reader. The function of the third person omniscient narrator is that s/he provides comments on many things and thus helps the reader to evaluate characters and events (e.g. through sarcastic comments about Mrs Islam's sons). The narrator also takes the readers to places and times the characters might not be able to, shows the readers different perspectives and reveals and criticises injustice and hypocrisy through contrasting situations.

> Moreover, it is precisely the adoption of a traditional narrative form which allows Ali to construct her narrative as translational; as well as freely entering the minds of its characters, it freely deciphers and decodes the nuances of all of their cross-cultural misinterpretations, a god-like omnipotence indeed.[231]

The familiar form – the novel shows characteristics of a *Bildungsroman*[232] – is combined with a not necessarily familiar content, i.e. the life of a Bangladeshi woman in London. The readers receive more information than the characters at times and the omniscient narrator functions as an institution that provides interpretations for the actions and events in the novel.

The inventory of characters in *Brick Lane* is limited to Bangladeshi people: those who live in Bangladesh, those who migrated to London and those who are actually British but whose parents are from Bangladesh. There are neither any white British characters, nor any non-Asian black characters, save a tiny number of exceptions: the tattoo lady and a police man (although their ethnicity is never mentioned explicitly)[233], a black bus driver, a US-American tourist, Chanu's white colleagues at the council and a couple of non-white people in the street. What these exceptions have in common, though, is that they have no voice. They do not get to talk, they are just talked about.

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[231] Perfect, Michael. "The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43.3 (2008). 115.

[232] I am aware that the term is used differently by many scholars and that there are narrower and broader definitions. I agree with Michael Perfect that *Brick Lane* shows patterns of the *Bildungsroman*: the novel follows the protagonist from her birth onwards and observes her development from a passive victim to an independent woman, who faces and resolves the conflicts between her own wishes and the rules of her upbringing and the Bangladeshi community in London. A success story according to Western standards with a strong focus on the individuum. "By the end of the novel, Nazneen has not only discovered a new-found agency but has also achieved both self-awareness and an understanding of the society around her, and has begun to forge an economic and social role for herself as well as a familial one. In so reconciling individuation and socialization, *Brick Lane* might usefully be termed a "multicultural Bildungsroman". (Perfect 2008: 119.)

[233] There are some hints, however: Nazneen is afraid that she might not be able to speak with the tattoo lady, a hint that she is not Bangladeshi. Neither the police officers who question the Imam at the mosque nor the officers who try to get the riots in Brick Lane under control are described in more detail, in the latter case only their uniforms and their comportment are mentioned (cf. 468f.).

Among these Bangladeshi characters, there are differences in "air time": Hasina, Chanu, Karim and Razia are dealt with in more detail than the others. The most important minor characters in *Brick Lane* are Nazneen's husband Chanu with their children Mohammad Raqib (who dies very young), Shahana and Bibi. Then there is Nazneen's young lover Karim, who was born and raised in London and becomes a religious extremist after suffering from discrimination. The most important minor characters who live in the compound are Razia Iqbal (with her daughter Shefali, her drug-addicted son Tariq, and her dead husband), the usurer Mrs Islam and her two sons, Nazneen's friends Nazma and Sorupa, and finally Dr Azad, his wife and his daughter who live in a nicer area in London. In Bangladesh, readers are confronted with Hasina and her various partners as well as Rupban (Nazneen's and Hasina's mother), Hamid (their father) and Mumtaz (Hamid's sister). In contrast to the more central characters (Nazneen, Hasina, Chanu, Karim, Razia), most other characters are rather constructed as types: Nazneen's mother Rupban, the eternal victim, Nazma and Sorupa, the gossipers, Mrs Islam, the exploiter, Mrs Azad, the assimilated immigrant.

There are various constellations which emphasize contrasts – e.g. between siblings, partners, generations and class members. They are of particular interest for me. Nazneen and Hasina (as well as Shahana and Bibi), Nazneen and Karim and Chanu, Chanu and Dr Azad, Nazneen and Razia are just a few of them. The contrasts are important for the characterisation and its effect, as the analysis below illustrates.

Nationality and ethnicity are not the most important differences, because the character inventory is rather homogenous in that sense. The constellation creates oppositions, and between the two or more sides cultural exchange may (or may not) happen. Through the characterisation in *Brick Lane*, the respective group's strategies of inclusion and exclusion as well as their institutions, beliefs and guiding principles become visible. An analysis of characterisation and narrative transmission techniques also reveals how characters can appropriate elements from other characters as well as which characters function as mediators.

Characterisation: Names

The characters' names are part of their characterisation, at least in that they hint at the cultural background of the families. It is difficult to tell whether the names are meant to be particularly telling as there are no explicit explanations in the novel and

the names are of mixed origins (Urdu, Hindi, Muslim). I do not think that the majority of the British audience was expected to read something into the names, except e.g. that Mohammad Raqib (81) implies a Muslim background. That names can also be deceiving is illustrated by Mrs Islam. Her name and her demeanour suggest that she is very religious, but it turns out that the opposite is the case. She tries to get her foot in every door and exploits gullible immigrants, e.g. through lending money and charging huge interest fees, something explicitly forbidden in the Qur'an. Many other names, such as Nazma and Sorupa, are simply markers for non-British characters. The fact that Nazneen and Chanu, Razia and her husband as well as Karim's parents decide to give their children names that at least do not sound English says something about the parents. I interpret it as another hint that they do not identify (fully) with their new host culture, and as an attempt to reassure themselves of their cultural heritage. In addition, for Nazneen in particular it would have been strange to give her children English or mixed names as at the moment of their birth she did not have contact with London outside Tower Hamlets and did not know much English except for the words 'sorry' and 'thank you' (cf. 19).[234]

Characterisation: Nazneen

The novel focuses on Nazneen and her development. Her perspective is privileged – in terms of narrative space as well as in terms of sympathy. Readers are invited to identify with her, empathise with her and approve of her decisions. Nazneen's change and identity formation have to do with the exchange processes she is involved in. In this context, she grapples with different cultures, languages, gender conventions, religion, and class conventions.

Nazneen's characterisation through her own thoughts and actions as well as through comments by the narrator and other characters is particularly interesting in *Brick Lane*. Nazneen is the most dynamic character in the novel and a large part of "what happens" in the novel actually happens inside her head. Through the narrator, readers learn about Nazneen's motivation to engage in cultural (ex)change and her evaluation of these processes.

[234] In Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth*, readers encounter a humorous section on naming: in one case, the immigrant parents chose an English-sounding name for their daughter in order to make her life easier – they believe that this way she will be less likely to be discriminated against – and the English parents gave their daughter a rather Indian-sounding name, because they liked the (exotic?) sound of it: "Sita is white (her mother liked the name) and Sharon is Pakistani (her mother thought it best – less trouble)." (Zadie Smith. *White Teeth*. London: Penguin, 2001. 326).

Nazneen changes from someone who never questions any of the conventions that control her life to someone who frees herself of these cultural constraints. At first, Nazneen's mantra is: "What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne." (16)[235] Nazneen shows signs of self-denial and self-sacrifice. She does not even own up to her own wishes: she sometimes starts a thought with "if I were the wishing type" (18), but then she brushes it away. The story of "How You Were Left To Your Fate"[236] was frequently told to Nazneen when she was a child and so she believed in fate and never questioned its logic (cf. 15). Nazneen accepts the husband her father chose for her, even though he is much older than she is and has "a face like a frog" (17). Sometimes, she is even disgusted by Chanu, seeing his "puffy face on the pillow next to her, his lips parted indignantly even as he slept." (18) Nazneen also accepts that she is sent to London, confined to a small apartment filled with clutter.

Nazneen's mother Rupban serves as Nazneen's role model for a long time. Rupban is said to endure whatever she is confronted with without ever rebelling or questioning her situation, not even when her newly born daughter's life is at stake (cf. 16). It takes Nazneen some time to see that her mother's way of tackling life does not work for herself, nor did it work for her mother who commits suicide. After a long struggle with her conscience and indoctrinated ideals, Nazneen finds a different 'solution' and gets rid of the limiting conventions with the help of mediators such as her daughters, Razia, Hasina and to some extent also Karim (for more details on the mediators, please see section below).

One of the main motivations for Nazneen's change is her loneliness and confinement to a very limited space and gender role. Nazneen feels "trapped inside this body, inside this room, inside this flat, inside this concrete slab of entombed humanity" (76), she even dreams of being locked up in the wardrobe or the wardrobe crushing her (cf. 24). Nazneen's bad conscience (among other things because of her affair with Karim) even makes her sick. She has an apparition of her mother who tells her to endure everything and tries to pull her down, physically and metaphorically (cf. 322). Nazneen collapses and the doctor diagnoses her with "nervous exhaustion" (339) and depression. In the time that follows, Nazneen finds relief in reciting "*You are nothing. You are nothing*" (332) because this frees her of

[235] "This principle ruled her life." (16)
[236] The repetition of this story illustrates the power a narrative can have for somebody's identity formation.

responsibility. When she looks for familiar soothing passages in the Qu'ran she cannot find any (cf. 332). When she reads Hasina's letters, she recovers a bit and finds peace (cf. 332). Hasina's letters seem to trigger a change: they make Nazneen think about in how far things are her own responsibility and how much of it is fate, if there is such a thing at all. So she comes to the conclusion that she has some responsibility for her life – and thus also decides to take matters in her own hands.[237] When Chanu keeps annoying Nazneen, she has finally enough and tells him "she's listening. But she is not obeying." (341)[238] Her fight for her right to work (compromise: work at home) and learn and speak English as well as her affair with Karim are further results of change, although her working can also be seen as a trigger for new changes – she has the impression of doing something useful, her self-esteem rises, she meets Karim, an attractive young man who gives her the impression that she is being listened to (cf. 262).

Not only Nazneen's development is interesting, but also how she is characterised by different characters. Tourists see in her an exotic motif and a part of their multicultural Brick Lane experience (cf. 254), Chanu sees in her the "unspoilt girl from the village" (22) and Karim sees in her "the real thing" (385), an 'authentic' Bengali woman who is neither too religious or prudish to sleep with him, nor a 'westernized' girl whose self-confident sexuality might scare Karim off (cf. 384). In a way, Nazneen serves as projection space for other characters – partly because she reveals so little about herself. For a long time, she does not know herself who she is and what she wants (cf. 405). When she learns that she can do whatever she likes (cf. 492), she experiments with different ideas and tasks in order to find out what she can be.

Contrast Relations: Nazneen and Hasina

Nazneen and Hasina are sisters who choose quite different paths in life. The contrasts between the two sisters and their lives shape both their characterisations, but also the representation of England (positive) and Bangladesh (negative).

While Nazneen is characterised as an obedient daughter and wife in the beginning, Hasina did not want to accept her "fate" and ran away from her family to

[237] But it takes her till page 405 to ask herself "*What* did she want?"

[238] It is not just that she does not obey any more. She also leaves more housework for Chanu and uses outbursts strategically to dominate Chanu and the children (cf. e.g. 349). Nazneen pretends to be mad in order to escape conventions and restrictions. There are even hints that Nazneen's mother did a similar thing and claimed she was possessed by an evil jinn (cf. 398-403).

marry the man she loved. However, Hasina has to discover that her choice of a self-determined life is made difficult in a system that discriminates against women. One could even argue that many aspects of Hasina's life are not really self-determined, because her initial choice (the love marriage that fails) radically limits her future choices in Bangladesh. In London, Nazneen has the option to rebel without facing the hardship Hasina has to endure in Bangladesh. It is possible for Nazneen to stop obeying and still have a flat, a job and a family in the UK, while Hasina's decisions lead to a hard life and a loss of status in Bangladesh.

While a lot of time and space is devoted to Nazneen's characterisation, the reader learns about Hasina almost exclusively through her letters. These letters are written in 'bad English' (see also section on "Language in *Brick Lane*" below) and Hasina appears rather simple-minded and gullible. Some critics see in the constellation and stereotypisation of Hasina a key element:

> Indeed, Hasina *is* such a stereotypical representation of defeat and naivety, because this forms a counterpoint to – and so serves to further emphasize and to render extraordinary – Nazneen's narrative of emancipation and enlightenment. […] What is perhaps most interesting about *Brick Lane* is the degree to which it is prepared to employ stereotypes in counterpoint to its narrative of empowerment; the degree to which it prioritizes the celebration of multiculturalism over the destabilization of the stereotypical.[239]

Nevertheless, Hasina plays a role in Nazneen's emancipation story. Hasina's letters inspire Nazneen to think along different lines and question her belief in fate. This way, Nazneen discovers that she can make her own decisions, that she has power over her family and her work, and that she can stand up to other people, e.g. Mrs Islam. It is important to note that cultural exchange theory cannot serve to explain everything; and it cannot be used to generalize that the contact with other (sub)cultures or at least a change of local context is a prerequisite for change. Hasina stays in Bangladesh and – without any references to role models of whatever kind or contact with different (sub)cultures – decides to break with the conventions and go for a love marriage with all the consequences this entails. It is Nazneen who has to have spatial distance from her indoctrinating parents and the village community in order to develop a new sense of self and appropriate new (cultural) practices.

[239] Perfect 2008: 119.

Contrast Relations: Nazneen and Chanu

Chanu serves as a counterpart to Nazneen. In the beginning, he has power over her and makes all the decisions that affect the couple on his own. The power relations change: while Nazneen is rather obedient at first, she gains financial independence and discovers her own will and the power of emotional blackmailing in the end.

However, it is not only the power relations that develop in the course of the novel: Chanu's characterisation also changes. At first he appears rather unlikable, among other things because of his continuous rambling about pointless matters, his slightly derogative talk about Nazneen (cf. 22, 23) and because of Nazneen's descriptions of his ugly looks and repulsive habits. In addition, he confines Nazneen to the apartment, does not want her to go out or learn English and constantly wants to teach her things while he is not interested in her opinion. Later, however, this changes. When Nazneen stays in the hospital with their son and after Nazneen's breakdown, he cooks and cares for her, he lets her decide on her own whether she wants to stay in London or move to Bangladesh together – and even Nazneen discovers some affection for him.

While Nazneen's case is an example for successful cultural exchange – successful in the sense that she frees herself of restrictive (Bangladeshi) conventions and encounters happiness through the change – , Chanu serves as an example for obstacles of cultural exchange and resignation. His frustration caused by discrimination culminates at times in a rejection of everything British. However, Chanu's cultural affiliation changes according to the respective context. One example is the way the girls are to dress: it depends on "where Chanu directed his outrage. If he had a Lion Hearts leaflet in his hand, he wanted his daughters covered. He would not be cowed by these Muslim-hating peasants. If he saw some girls go by in hijab he became agitated at this display of peasant ignorance. Then the girls went out in skirts." (265) So Chanu's 'cultural policies' are not governed by principle, but depend on the context. Similarly, he confines Nazneen to their flat at first and justifies this with the conventions of the community. He only allows Nazneen to work when it becomes an economic necessity. This does not keep him from boasting how liberal he is.

Chanu speaks of his upcoming "promotion" countless times – but after many disappointments his accounts move from "when" to "if" (90). The experienced racial discrimination sends him to a state of depression and fear. In the beginning, he still

complains about institutional racism and a glass ceiling for migrants (cf. 72), later on his state turns into a serious depression (cf. 203).

> He stopped making plans. […] Before that, each collapse of ambition, though it dented his surface, had goaded him to new determination, a more urgent reaching. He started every new job with a freshly spruced suit and a growing collection of pens. His face shone with hope. And then greyed with frustration, with resentment […] But he was slighted. By customers, by suppliers, by superiors and inferiors. He worked hard for respect but he could not find it. (203)

As a result, Chanu encapsulates himself in a (self-)constructed version of Bangladeshi culture and attempts to extend this to his family – until the point of making plans to go back to Bangladesh.

(Contrast) Relations: Nazneen and Karim

Karim functions as a mediator or catalyst for change. Through her affair with Karim Nazneen breaks a number of conventions. Karim helps Nazneen to discover a different way to see her body, express her desires and explore her sexuality. On the one hand, the affair has a liberating effect on Nazneen. On the other hand, she becomes paranoid because of her indoctrinated feelings of guilt. In addition, her affair with Karim is not represented as a relationship between equals. He orders her to "get undressed … and get into bed" (288) and "picked her up like a child and held her." (385) Nazneen "was willing to be claimed" (263) and Nazneen enjoys that he listens to her and gives her the feeling that what she says is important. However, Cormack rightly points out that this happens predominantly on occasions where Nazneen is agreeing with Karim anyway or emphasizing something he said.[240] In the end, Nazneen does not exchange her relationship with Chanu for a partnership with Karim. She realizes that in order to find out what she wants and lead a self-determined life, she needs to get rid of Karim, too.

Karim's character is interesting because he forms a contrast to Nazneen: he was born and raised in the UK and feels British.[241] More importantly, he appears self-confident and comfortable to mix and match British and Bangladeshi elements. To the reader, Karim is introduced as an attractive young man, sure of himself, with short hair, tight jeans, sleeves rolled up and a gold chain. His English is said to be better than his Bengali when Nazneen discovers he stammers in Bengali (cf. 210,

[240] Cf. Cormack 2006: 705.
[241] He says about the UK: "This is my country." (212)

211). Nazneen is attracted by his confidence and believes that Karim had something that she, Hasina and Chanu could not find: "a place in the world" (264).

However, after he starts the affair with Nazneen, Karim becomes increasingly 'devotional', which becomes visible e.g. by his growing a beard and starting to pray more often. After 9/11, it gets even worse[242]: he changes into Panjabi pyjamas and other signs of his opposition to mainstream British culture. Because of the islamophobic climate in Britain, he decides to highlight his "difference" even more. In the end, there are even rumours that he joined a jihad training camp in Afghanistan (cf. 485f.). In this respect, Karim's characterisation degenerated to a stereotype of a young radical Muslim.

Later on we learn that Nazneen's notion of Karim having secured his place in the world was only true "in her head" (448). She realises that Karim looked foreign to the English, and to Bangladeshis he appeared British, e.g. because of his lack of Bangladeshi language skills, his looks and the fact that he had never been to Bangladesh (cf. 448).

Nazneen believes that Karim used his idea of her – "the real thing" (385) – in order to come to terms with his Bengali identity. According to Nazneen's interpretation she was for him: "[a] Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her" (454). When she breaks up with him, she claims that she had to make this choice because of her children in order to "lighten[…] his load" (452). However, Nazneen finally states: "From the very beginning to the very end, we didn't see things. What we did – we made each other up." (455)

Mediators: Nazneen's Daughters, Razia, Mrs Islam

The most important mediators who encourage Nazneen to change are her daughters and Razia. The advocates of more traditional conventions, in this case e.g. self-renunciation, piety and submission to the husband, are Nazneen's parents, Chanu, Karim and Mrs Islam.

First and foremost, Nazneen's daughters simply "demanded to be understood" (194). This made her learn more English than she had previously done through Razia's accounts of her English lessons, "television, the brief exchanges at

[242] It is indeed presented as something negative or at least questionable, in particular the double moral standards that become visible when Karim sleeps with Nazneen and then acts like a very religious man.

the few non-Bengali shops she entered, the dentist, the doctor, teachers at the girls' schools" (194). In addition, her daughters also demand of Nazneen that she thinks about what would be best for them (especially in connection to the question of whether they should go back to Bangladesh or not) and then take a stand for them (cf. 183, 480).

In the beginning, the other women who live on the estate, in particular Razia and Mrs Islam, are the only contacts Nazneen has.[243] Razia is a friend of Nazneen's and more liberal and emancipated than her other friends. She functions as a mediator and tells Nazneen: "You can do whatever you like." (492) Razia is characterised by Nazneen as a funny and kind-hearted (47), sometimes mocking (27) woman who is very outspoken. For example, she criticises Mrs Islam openly and flicks her fingers at the gossipers. Razia goes through a lot of trouble because she wants her children to have a better life (cf. 189). So she attends English lessons (cf. 74) – her children already speak English because they went to school in London – and works at a sweat shop. Her husband, who forbade her to work at first, dies in an accident and cannot get in her way anymore. Razia functions as a mediator for Nazneen – among other things she teaches her English, goes out with her and acts as a supportive friend. Chanu does not like Razia; he criticises the way she dresses, raises her children, leads her life (cf. 83f.), and if he could he would forbid Nazneen to see her.

Razia has a special status among the characters in *Brick Lane*: she applied for British citizenship and got a British passport. She usually wears a Union Jack shirt and defends the English and the welfare system (cf. 73) when Chanu says the English or at least 'the system' was racist: "There are good ones, and bad ones. Just like us. And some of them you can be friendly with. Some aren't so friendly." (73) She says "Ask him this, then. Is it better than our own country, or is it worse? If it is worse, then why is he here? If it is better, why does he complain?" (72) Razia has a rather pragmatic approach to many things and, as already mentioned, has the future of her children in mind. However, there are also some contradicting examples: she does not want to admit that her son has a drug problem and waits rather long to finally help him. And although she thinks love marriages are so romantic (cf. 50), she proclaims

[243] The only white person in the compound is the tattoo lady who is obese, tattooed all over her body and an alcoholic. It is never explicitly mentioned that she is white, but Nazneen is afraid that she might not be able to start a conversation with her if the tattoo lady only spoke English (cf. 19). Later on, Razia makes allusions that the tattoo lady was sent to a mental institution (sitting in her own excrements). "Someone should have got to her sooner. Always sitting there in the window, like a painted statue. Did no one see?" (130)

that “Shefali will make a love marriage over my dead body.” (51) So Razia remains ambivalent.

There are some parts of Razia’s characterisation that left me dissatisfied. The descriptions of her appearance include references to her “man-sized hands” (27), the fact that she cannot wear a sari because it looks strange on her (cf. 27), her short hair cut (cf. 73) and her smoking (cf. 188ff.) – to the extreme comment: “There was nothing feminine about her face” (72). These descriptions stand in contrast to the representations of other female characters that run along much more conventionally feminine patterns. Razia, however, is the most independent of these characters. The novel suggests that emancipation and independence are linked to masculine attributes. This is another example of rather stereotypical representations in the novel.

Mrs Islam also functions as a mediator, albeit in a different way than Razia or Nazneen’s daughters. Mrs Islam acts as a mentor for many immigrants who have just arrived because of her experience and her social standing as an older member of the community. Chanu calls her “very respectable” (82). However, the reader finds out about her true nature and her personal interests in helping others: she is a usurer and exploits the naivety and desperation of her ‘mentees’.

Mrs Islam has her own approach to intercultural encounters: she tells Nazneen to keep other cultures at a distance. Mrs Islam claims that she is “Mixing with all sorts: Turkish, English, Jewish. All sorts” (29) at work, but keeps “purdah in [her] mind” (purdah is the veil). “But if you mix with all these people, even if they are good people, you have to give up your culture to accept theirs. That’s how it is.” (29) Mrs Islam says this without further explanation and it takes some time until information is provided that she is a usurer, a hypocrite and that she bends the rules to fit her respective aims.[244] Her advice not to mix with other cultures is an attempt to scare newcomers and make them dependent on her.

There are no mediators between mainstream London and the Tower Hamlets community. However, during the protest, the “march against the march against the mullahs”, many white people turn up, although Mrs Islam thought no white person would turn up. This can be read as a hint that the absence of white people from the

[244] As Razia explains at some point, Mrs Islam never complied with Islamic clothing or gender conventions in her former job. For her current “work” in the estate, however, the religious mask is useful to win the trust of Muslim immigrants.

community is partly the characters' perception. The constellations in the novel show signs of segregation – if not completely, then at least in the characters' private lives.

The omniscient narrator provides insight into many characters' minds and thus unveils various reasons for a rejection of cultural exchange, but also motives for appropriation processes. One big motivation for (ex)change is the discrimination the (British-)Asian characters face in London. As a result, many characters choose to live in the segregated community, Chanu goes back to Bangladesh and Karim becomes radical. The main reasons that are explicitly mentioned for some characters' refusal to engage with the British host community are the fear of assimilation and the fear of an estrangement of their children. This is shared by a number of characters, in particular the older ones. Furthermore, another simple reason of a lack of contact and exchange is the confinement that many female characters face.

Nazneen is doubly discriminated against – by the Bangladeshi community because she is a woman and by the British because of her ethnicity. So Nazneen's change to more independence means that she neither assimilates to the British mainstream nor submits to the (misogynist) Bangladeshi community rules. Among the main motivations for exchange are respectively the wish for an escape of the community's confinement, which different life styles seem to offer, but also the desire to provide a better life for their children. And finally, the quest of some characters to find their own "place in life" leads them to try out different practices, ideologies, etc., such as different gender and family conceptions in Nazneen's case and radical Islamism in Karim's case.

4.1.3.3. Phenomena of Social Organisation and Practice

Phenomena of social organisation and practice are a complex field as gender, class, and religious aspects – to name just the most prominent for *Brick Lane* – are entangled and cannot be completely separated from each other. For the purpose of my analysis, I have organised this section according to the categories of gender, class, and religion. Even though these aspects all work together in the characters' identity creation and thus have an impact on processes and assessments of cultural exchange, I find it quite difficult to draw a line between mere personal development (change) and change caused by actual cultural exchange or transfer. In some cases, cultural exchange theory cannot account for changes in literary characters.

Transfer of Bengali Conventions to London

In terms of phenomena of social organisation, the inhabitants of Nazneen's and Chanu's area have tried to recreate the patriarchal society of Bangladeshi countryside in Tower Hamlets. Chanu comments on it: "look how they live: just recreating the villages here" (32) This is a one-sided transfer and not welcomed by some of the Londoners, such as the Lion Hearts group. The segregation and rejection of anything British is implicitly criticised by Nazneen – as is an assimilation to the British mainstream, such as represented through Mrs Azad.

The double standards of the imported conventions are criticised by Nazneen, Hasina and the narrator. In Britain as well as in Bangladesh, the represented communities adhere to rules of social organisation marked by religious dogmas. They have in common that they result in misogynism and unfair conditions. Those characters who can afford it find a way to work around the limits of the conventions, but at the same time they perpetuate the system to gain an advantage, such as Mrs Islam who charges usurious interest or employers in Bangladesh who exploit single women.

From the religious and conservative characters' point of view, the transfer of the Bengali conventions is not entirely successful in the sense of an identical copy: women go to work, children do not obey their parents, drink alcohol and dress 'strangely' etc. There are implications that the community develops to a more liberal and open way of life after the protests. Some former members of the Bengal Tigers want to start a new group that is "not religious anyway. It's going to be a political organization. Local politics." (486) However, Nazneen suspects that the founder's aim behind it is rather to ascend to power and become the chairman than to actually carry out measures (cf. 486).

Gender Issues and Conventions

The female protagonists are more likely to want change – because they are indeed discriminated against and trapped by the male community members and conventions imported from (mostly rural) Bangladesh. "The novel is particularly of interest as an examination of the double bind that female migrants face, treated as alien by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities."[245] In the end, Nazneen finds a way to deal with both aspects: she gets over her fear of white people

[245] Cormack 2006: 700.

and manages to convince Chanu to return to Bangladesh on his own. Nazneen stays in London, starts a business with her friends and leads a self-determined life. In this context, England is depicted to provide more freedom and choice than Bangladesh.

However, before Nazneen manages to free herself from the conventions of the community, she is taught to fear the social control of the others, in particular the gossip. Women in particular are said to be watched closely – in reference to some ideologies that define a family's honour depending on the comportment of the female family members – and if there is something that people deem inappropriate, they will talk about it. The conventions imposed on the inhabitants of the Dogwood Estate stipulate that women stay at home, cook, clean and raise the children while men go to work to support the family (cf. 184). Although nobody ever mentions what the consequences might be, everybody seems to be preoccupied by what people might say: "Once you get talked about, then that's it." (59)[246] In fact, once Razia and Nazneen break with some of the conventions[247], they discover that their fear was unfounded. Nazneen confronts Mrs Islam and has an affair, Razia goes to work and they are neither punished nor excluded by the others. The fear about the gossip was just spread by those who tried to recreate a Bangladeshi environment in the Brick Lane area. Who they are is not mentioned explicitly in the novel, but Mrs Islam and the religious institutions are implicitly characterised as (self-proclaimed) community leaders. Chanu remains preoccupied with what the others may think (cf. 45), possibly because he already lost the status he had in Bangladesh and does not want to 'sink any deeper'. He claims to be more modern and 'westernized' than the others – he often emphasizes his university education and rational thinking – but Chanu is ultimately unable (or unwilling) to change the rules (cf. 45). In the end, Nazneen is allowed to work, not because of Chanu's changed attitude, but out of economic necessity (cf. 184). He is only 'westernized' if it is convenient for him.

In Bangladesh, women are seen as inferior to men[248] and the fathers and later the husbands control the women's lives. Nazneen believes that being a woman means suffering, watching her mother and aunt. Growing up with these role models, she

[246] Razia even tells Nazneen in the beginning that it might be better to shop at Sainsbury's instead of at local Bengali stores because there might be less gossip (cf. 59).
[247] Razia adopts a pragmatic approach – possibly out of necessity. When Nazneen asks Razia what the community will say if Razia goes to work, she answers: "'Will the community feed me? Will it buy footballs for my son? Let the community say what it will. I say this to the community.' And she flicked her fingers." (97)
[248] When Rupban announces after Nazneen's birth that she had a baby girl, her husband Hamid answers: "'I know. Never mind [...] 'What can you do?' And he went away again." (14)

cannot wait to suffer, too (cf. 102-103). Women such as Nazneen's mother are complicit in perpetuating the often misogynist culture in Bangladesh. Her mother taught Nazneen to accept everything without questioning it.[249] However, Rupban herself is unhappy[250] and can neither live with her husband's affairs, nor does she manage to confront her husband. Instead of accepting her 'destiny' or trying to change it, she kills herself. Instead of trying to save her daughters from the same 'fate', she just passes on the fatalism. At first Nazneen seems to be perpetuating the system, too[251], but ultimately she decides to choose a different path, in order to save her daughters from suffering the same things she did.

In order to escape restrictive conventions, Nazneen and her mother both use a similar strategy and act 'crazy'. Nazneen tells her daughters a story about Rupban being possessed by an evil jinni (cf. 395ff.). The account actually implies that Rupban was playing mad in order to be left alone and escape restrictive conventions. Cormack thinks along the same lines: "Amma used the bad jinn to allow her to vent her frustration with her husband; without this outlet, she commits suicide."[252] And Nazneen discovers that Chanu can in fact care for her, cook and do the housework (cf. 128f.) when she is in the hospital with her newborn son and later when she is diagnosed with nervous exhaustion. Later on, Nazneen strategically uses outbursts that Chanu takes for symptoms of her illness to make him and her daughters comply with her wishes (cf. 394).

The actual cultural change or break with a culture of feminine submission happens through work. Nazneen first gains some financial independence and then also more self-confidence and power in her relationship(s) when she starts to work. Eventually, Nazneen is able to support herself and stay in Britain because she, Razia, Jorina and Sorupa start their own business.

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[249] "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men." (80)

[250] Rupban is represented as continuously sad and suffering. She has a "sad face ... as ever" (14) and is "famous for crying" (15). Nazneen's father told his daughter: "your mother is naturally a saint" (15). The narrator also mentions, though, that he always looked away when he said this about his wife (cf. 15). He might have found it annoying – or he may have had a bad conscience because of his affairs. The effect of this romantisation is that Nazneen's idea about the necessity to endure and suffer is strengthened (cf. 15).

[251] A hint is that Nazneen's daughters consider it possible that their parents could choose partners for them; the girls threaten each other with horror stories about arranged marriages to abusive husbands (cf. 395).

[252] Cormack 2006: 716. When Nazneen's mother e.g. cannot take any more of what she thinks is expected of her (endurance), she commits suicide, although it is forbidden by her religion. "And then she dies, and in dying proved life unpredictable and beyond control." (46) Nazneen draws the connection between suicide and control when she thinks about the woman who jumped from the 16th floor: "with this single everlasting act she defied everything and everyone." (40) They were both looking for a way to get out of their confinement.

However, the representation of working women is problematic at a closer look. Nazneen explicitly blames Jorina's son's alcohol problem on the fact that Jorina works instead of staying at home (cf. 48). Razia's case is similar: she goes to work and soon afterwards her son becomes a drug addict. In this case, the novel takes up a conservative stance. The underlying message is that Jorina and Razia are bad mothers because they work instead of staying at home. This works against the notion that work can be empowering and a solution to the discrimination against women.

In Bangladesh, going to work means a lot of trouble for Hasina, as working women are frowned upon and constantly accused of being whores. Hasina has to work in order to make a living: as a divorced woman who has run away from her family she is marginalized and exploited. However, Hasina feels that "working is like cure" (152). So in her case, work is at the same time a "cure" and a necessity. Hasina's strategy is to keep "pure in mind" (153), but unfortunately the others do not care. She is a victim of the double standards in Bangladesh: after an alleged affair with a colleague Hasina is fired, whereas Abdul, the man involved, gets verbally 'patted on the back' (cf. 161-162). Afterwards, Hasina has to prostitute herself in order to survive. She comments bitterly: "They put me out from factory for untrue reason and due to they put me out the reason have come now as actual truth." (169)

Class

The migration to London results in a change of class status for Chanu and Nazneen. While Chanu was a member of the middle-class in Bangladesh, in the UK, he is part of the lower class. He cannot find a job based on his degree in English literature from Dhaka University and has to accept work below his qualification level, e.g. driving a taxi. Nazneen, on the other hand, moves up from lower-class (and her marginal status as unemployed female immigrant) to at least working-class (see above).

Chanu complains that the British do not acknowledge the differences in class and education among the migrants: "to a white person, we are all the same: dirty little monkeys all in the same monkey clan." (28) Chanu, however, is very class conscious and hurt by this failure of the British to acknowledge his status as a university-educated man from the capital of Bangladesh (cf. 34f.). According to Chanu, the British job market (in particular the local council) is racist. It is implied, though, that he just does not understand how the class system and unwritten rules in

the UK work, such as networking in the pub (cf. 37)[253]. The description of the opportunities for the next generation is more optimistic: "Shefali is going to university. Sorupa's nephew is going to Oxford." (464) This conveys the message that those born in the UK do not face the same problem anymore. However, little narrative space is given to these new developments.

Chanu attempts to emphasize the difference between Bangladeshis from Dhaka, like him, and those from rural Sylhet. This regional difference also results in class difference, because in the region of Sylhet, the vast majority are peasants or field workers, whereas in Dhaka there are richer and more middle-class people. Chanu talks very condescendingly about Sylhetis to distinguish himself from this group[254]. This endeavour fails. Consequently, Chanu tries to re-claim a higher status by socializing with doctors and other people he deems respectable (cf. 89) and marries a wife with a high status in Bangladesh who would support and not contradict him. He also tries to fit in as much as possible with the community he lives in (he tries to avoid to give reasons for the others to gossip about him). Chanu also acquires more certificates in order to improve his status, but this is mocked by Nazneen, Dr Azad and the narrator alike (cf. e.g. 35). In the end, Chanu is unemployed, Nazneen supports the family; Chanu resigns and decides to move back to Bangladesh. This is depicted as a defeat as Chanu does not return as planned with money made in the UK. Furthermore, he cannot find a job at the university and ultimately also loses his social status in Bangladesh.

Class and social hierarchies in Bangladesh are also addressed. The richer families, such as Hasina's employer Lovely, try to emulate middle-class British style in order to communicate their higher class. This becomes visible in their houses[255], their life style, and their appropriation of English names, such as Lovely, Daisy and Jimmy (cf. 334f.). However, Lovely is portrayed as a 'desperate housewife' with very limited agency and options beyond charity work. Also, all rich characters have in common that they are involved in some kind of corruption.

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[253] In addition, Chanu likes to see himself as a victim and the narrator makes fun of this: "There was in the world a great shortage of respect and Chanu was among the famished." (203)

[254] "They all stick together because they come from the same district. They know each other from the villages, and they come to Tower Hamlets and they think they are back in the village. Most of them have jumped ship. That's how they've come."(28)

[255] Lovely's and James' house in Dhaka looks different from traditionally Bengali houses as it has a reception room, master bedroom, varnished furniture, electric lights in the servant's quarters etc. – Hasina is stupefied (cf. 220-221). So while British people in London buy saris to be up to date (cf. 480f.), the Bengali elite buys things according to British style, so there is still a connection between the two countries in spite of the demise of the Empire, on a symbolic level.

The social mobility that Nazneen experiences is not shared by Hasina. Hasina is marginalized as a divorced woman or a woman who left her husband without his consent and cannot expect to participate in Bangladesh's mainstream society at all. From what is represented, she cannot move up at all, because she remains stigmatised. So social mobility in Bangladesh – in particular related to gender, e.g. women who do not follow the conventions – is represented to be non-existent. One of the few instances of temporary relief Hasina experiences is her marriage with an albino man, who is an outcast like her. He is marginalized because of his looks and she because of her past as divorced woman and accusations of being a whore. "All his life people been stare at my husband. I think that how he getting so serious. Also how he understand things for woman like me." (174)

Religion

Religion does not play such a big role in *Brick Lane* and there is not much exchange between religious groups. One reason is that there is not so much contact between believers of different religions. Secondly, there is also rejection by those in powerful positions, because they have an interest in things staying the way they are. They import e.g. an imam from Bangladesh who presumably does not know about life in Britain and thus may not focus on how to practise Islam in this specific environment but advocate a more dogmatic approach.[256] Certain understandings of religion and identity are represented as hindering contact with others and thus also exchange, such as fundamentalist ideas about not mingling with non-believers and an obsession with keeping pure (purdah). Mostly, however, this is done through characters that are not deemed likeable, such as Mrs Islam.

Religious institutions, such as the new mosque school that is about to be built near Brick Lane, are seen with mixed feelings by the characters. Religion and social rules are intertwined. In some cases, religious affiliations put pressure on people, in particular on women in the Brick Lane area. And those who have power within these institutions, such as Mrs Islam who donated a large sum of money to the mosque (cf. 197), have an interest in keeping or increasing the power of these institutions. Chanu refuses to send his daughters to the newly built Madrassa Mosque because he is afraid that his daughters will be indoctrinated there (cf. 197). Instead, he wants to teach them about the "Qur'an but also Hindu philosophy, Buddhist thought, Christian

[256] "And she knew that the imam had only recently been imported. [...] He had not the slightest idea what was going on." (242)

parables." (197) However, this is yet another of Chanu's projects that does not work out.

On one occasion, Chanu refers to Bangladesh's history: "Bengal was Hindu long before it was Muslim, and before that Buddhist, and that was after the first Hindu period. We are only Muslims because of the Moguls." (197) First of all, this is an example of forced cultural transfer. However, Chanu does not question the result, i.e. the cultural assimilation through oppressors in this case. At the same time, however, he does not want anything to change for Bangladeshis living in Britain – he does not want to assimilate, not even partly – while simultaneously proclaiming how educated and westernized he is. In this respect, he is inconsistent and selective of his affiliation depending on the current context.

Chanu himself is not very religious. He does not pray (cf. 110) and he drinks alcohol at the Azads. Nevertheless, they name their first born Mohammed Raqib (Ruku) – a Muslim name.[257] But when his disappointment with life in Britain grows too big, he turns to religion: "'From now on,' he said, 'all the money goes into the Home Fund. All of it.' That night, for the first time since they were married, Nazneen watched him take down the Qur'an." (252)

For Nazneen, religion is soothing. She uses repetitions and incomprehensible passages from the Qu'ran[258] because they soothe her. In addition, there is a parallel between Nazneen's fatalism and her understanding of religion (cf. 101/102). She finds comfort in the thought that she has no power – and thus no responsibility – because everything is arranged by God. This is yet another example for Nazneen's indoctrination and how much time and effort it must have cost her to learn to question everything and find her own way.

There are a couple more instances in which religion or its interpretations are criticised. In Bangladesh, religion and superstition are represented to merge almost seamlessly. We encounter holy men who engage in exorcism of jinns, which is then again detected to be a fake, and in their prayers they fill the gaps with addresses to the elements (cf. 401). And while in some cases Islam serves as a justification – e.g. for keeping wives at home or for banning certain things, such as music[259] – the seemingly religious characters are unveiled to be hypocrites. Mrs Islam e.g. charges

[257] Raqib is one of the 99 names of Allah. (Cf. Tharwat Kades. *Der Dialog Zwischen Christen Und Muslimen Im Spannungsfeld Von Tradition Und Moderne*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008. 90.)
[258] "She did not know what the words meant but the rhythm of them soothed her." (21)
[259] The Bengal Tigers claim that "live music is un-Islamic" (413).

riba – i.e. usurious interest – and Karim has an affair with a married woman. Karim supports suicide bombers, whereas Nazneen points out that this is against Islam (cf. 382/383). In addition, Karim praises the internet for Islamic education, but fails to understand what he is reading, such as a passage about the ban on adultery (cf. 347/348). In radical Islam, Karim finds orientation and a purpose when he is increasingly discriminated against by the British mainstream society in the context of Islamophobic tendencies after 9/11.

However, there are also instances in which religious institutions build bridges. The women's shelter in Dhaka that Hasina finds help in e.g. is run by Canadian Catholics (cf. 220). The women who seek the shelter are marginalized in Dhaka, so the novel suggests that it needs a foreign institution to cater for their needs; so here we have an example of transfer. However, it is an example of the Western charitable institution which is required to give local women help, rather than a local institution. This implies a hierarchical relationship between locals and Western migrants with the charity clearly having the upper hand.

4.1.3.4. Language in *Brick Lane*

The use of language plays a special role in *Brick Lane* – on the text level it functions in particular as a means of empowerment and participation, or as a constitutive feature of humorous scenes about misunderstandings and word plays. On a meta level, the way the English language is used is at times problematic, e.g. in the case of Hasina's letters and some further passages. How can this be related to the representation of cultural transfer? First of all, the whole text is quasi a translation, the "original" language being Bengali. We learn right in the beginning that Nazneen does not speak English, so the readers have to accept that what they are reading in English is actually Bengali. Nevertheless, the main part of the story is set in London, so there are also some scenes in which the language is meant to represent English. In order to clarify which language is spoken at what time, there are a couple of markers for language switches throughout the novel.

The concepts, metaphors, figurative speech etc. that Nazneen uses in Bengali have to be translated into English. As "[t]he signifying system that one culture uses to understand itself cannot be rendered transparently in a new language"[260], this becomes an interesting example of cultural transfer. And Cormack has got a point

[260] Cormack 2006: 708.

when he says that "there is an unavoidable irony in depicting Nazneen's struggle with English entirely within that language."[261]

The use of English in *Brick Lane* is sometimes problematic. While Nazneen does not speak any English, the novel, which primarily focuses on her perspective, is written in English. So "the whole text is rather the product of a fictitious synchronisation, i.e. an ongoing, imagined translation."[262] In a number of passages, markers in the text clarify which language is spoken at the moment, with Bengali being the default language. When Razia speaks to Nazneen, it is written in English, but they talk in Bengali, so the words that are in italics are English in their conversation ("*sinking, sinking, drinking water*" (129)). However, this is not done consistently. Sometimes the actual English words are not put in italics, but the narrator explains which language is used, such as in the case of "'*Amar ingreji poda oti shamanyo.*' In English, I can read only a little bit." (243). Sometimes, however, there is no indication at all, e.g. in the case of the Lion Hearts' leaflets (e.g. 257) which must be in English.

However, these instances are not as confusing and problematic as Hasina's letters. They are a source of concern: as Hasina remained in Bangladesh and Nazneen cannot read English, we have to assume that they write to each other in their native language. Why, then, is the English "translation" of their conversations written in such bad English, e.g. with many grammatical mistakes and with thoughts lacking complexity, compared to the representation of Nazneen's thoughts and utterances? This is not to say that only British Standard English is 'legitimate' English. However, while "Indian English" has specific linguistic markers, the English used in Hasina's letters is characterised by undercomplex vocabulary and random grammar mistakes.[263] This method of characterisation leads to an unnecessarily stereotypical image of Hasina.

Nazneen, however, does not seem to have any difficulties in expressing herself, at least in thought or in the Bengali she speaks with her friends. "The novel

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[261] Ibid.: 710.

[262] Blackmore, Sabine. "Lost in Translation: The Problematic Nature of Translation in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Internal Teacher Training. 26 March 2009. Unpublished manuscript. 7.

[263] For Asian English linguistic markers, please cf. "Asian English." *British Library*. http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/case-studies/minority-ethnic/asian/ (accessed 12 September 2012). See also: Kortmann, Bernd and Edgar Schneider (eds). *A Handbook of Varieties of English*. Volume 2. Morphology and Syntax. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004. In particular: Rakesh M. Bhatt. "Indian English: Syntax." 1016-1030. And Ahmar Mahboob. "Pakistani English: Morphology and Syntax." (1045-1057).

certainly confronts the 'struggles between cultures' in immigrant identity, but in terms of the language and the form of the novel, those struggles seem to be over."[264] "Rather than encounter a mode of representation that is fragmentary or provisional, we find a voice that confidently synthesizes different experiences to one identifiable reality."[265] So is there no conflict there? Although I agree with Cormack that it is ironic, indeed, that everything is expressed in English although Nazneen is in fact struggling to find her place in England, I think there is another way to look at it, a way which focuses more on the didactic aspect of the novel. I find the discrepancy between her thoughts and the words she actually utters quite striking. From the insights into her mind, the readers know that she is a rather intelligent person with complex thoughts, feelings and plans. However, her English fellow citizen will never know this because she does not speak any English (or later only a few words, but she is not (yet) able to express everything in the new language), so she is perceived as quiet, possibly also as stupid. One could read this as an appeal for readers to transfer this 'insight' to their everyday experience of immigrants: just because somebody does not speak English, it does not mean that he or she is less intelligent. Some critics have expressed that they do not feel that the sophistication of the narrative voice, in particular when using Nazneen as a focaliser, is appropriate as she has no formal education and has not seen much more than her little village and the Dogwood Estate in Tower Hamlets.[266] So whether the above-mentioned didactic function can be fulfilled depends on whether the individual reader judges the voice to be credible. As *Brick Lane* is largely written in a realist tradition[267] which demands qua convention to be read as a realistic and credible account, I suspect that readers will also accept the sometimes sophisticated voice to be Nazneen's. As mentioned above, I find the use of language most problematic in Hasina's letters.

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[264] Cormack 2006: 711.
[265] Ibid.: 710.
[266] Cf. ibid.
[267] While there is a plethora of definitions of Realism and the realist novel, it should suffice here to concentrate on the main idea. The most important characteristic is that realist novels want to be credible and 'authentic' representations of the world that have a strong connection between text and context. It is often linked to some criticism of the social conditions at hand. Readers of such novels are invited to discover the references to their world and deem characters, actions and motivations as probable. Readers are encouraged to question the conditions, not the representation. For more details on the conventions of realist novels see e.g. Walder, Dennis. *The Realist Novel*. London: Routledge, 1996. For an account of realist conventions and the effect of such representation in *Brick Lane* see Cormack 2006: 713ff.

On the Textual Level: Empowerment and Participation

On the textual level, learning English means empowerment for Nazneen. Before, the fact that Nazneen does not know any English in the beginning except 'sorry' and 'thank you' impedes Nazneen's establishment of connections with her neighbours, such as the tattoo lady. She can only communicate with people who speak Bengali, which hinders exchange with English characters. However, as cultural exchange can happen between more than mere nationally different cultures, Nazneen's lack of English in the beginning does not mean that she cannot be an agent of cultural exchange at all. It just means that one form of exchange is rather unlikely to happen. In return, learning English theoretically helps to facilitate contact to the English host culture. However, while this has the potential to encourage cultural exchange, this potential is not fully exploited.

Nazneen perceives her lack of language skills as limiting. This is one of the reasons she feels confined to the house in the beginning: she is scared to talk to somebody who might not understand Bengali and thus to find herself in an uncomfortable situation. So Nazneen wants to learn English, but her husband reacts dismissively: "Where's the need anyway?"(37) "You're going to be a mother […] Will that not keep you busy enough? And you can't take a baby to college. Babies have to be fed; they have their bottoms to be cleaned. It's not as simple as that. Just to go to college, like that." (77) As we know from previous conversations about 'going out' (meaning grocery shopping, not clubbing), Chanu might be afraid of "what people would think" (cf. 45). In addition, he knows deep inside how ridiculous his collection of certificates is (cf. 422 and 458) and so he tries to give 'going to college' more meaning by denying it to Nazneen. However, at some point Nazneen decides to go out anyway, probably triggered by her frustration with Chanu and by a letter from Hasina (cf. 52). Nazneen is quite proud of herself after her first encounter with a stranger: "She had spoken, in English, to a stranger, and she had been understood and acknowledged. It was very little. But it was something." (61) For Nazneen, it is a sign of recognition and success.

Finally, Nazneen learns English through Razia, who takes English lessons, "television, the brief exchanges at the few non-Bengali shops she entered, the dentist, the doctor, teachers at the girls' schools." (194) but mostly because of her daughters: "it was the girls who taught her. Without lessons, textbooks or Razia's 'key phrases'. Their method was simple: they demanded to be understood." (194)

But Nazneen and Razia are not the only ones who learn a foreign language: Chanu forces Shahana and Bibi to speak Bengali at home (193) without further explanation. So in their case it is not a choice. On top of this, he forces them to recite Bengali poetry (cf. 178-181). The reason for his 'lessons' is that he wants his daughters to learn about Bangladesh's cultural heritage and culture – and does not trust the English school to provide reliable information – , in particular since he decided to go back. "Chanu was taking his family back home and Tagore was the first step on the journey." (179) Chanu decides that no English is allowed in the house, but we learn through Nazneen that their daughters do not really follow this rule (cf. 193f.). Nazneen is not that strict and allows them to switch: "Nazneen let it pass. Perhaps even encouraged it." (194) In the case of the poem, the readers have to do with a transcription of the verses, followed by an English translation of the poem. It is above all Shahana who is annoyed – because she is forced to recite a poem she does neither like nor seems to understand.

> Shahana did not want to listen to Bengali classical music. Her written Bengali was shocking. She wanted to wear jeans, she hated her kameez and spoiled her entire wardrobe by pouring ink on them. If she could choose between baked beans and dal it was no contest. When Bangladesh was mentioned she pulled a face. She did not know and would not learn that Tagore was more than poet and Nobel laureate, and no less than the true father of her nation. Shahana did not care. Shahana did not want to go back home. (180)

Chanu wants to prepare them for what he calls return (cf. 182 and 185f.), when for the girls it is an act of forced migration. The expressions "her nation" and "back home" in the quotation above are ironic – Bangladesh is not *her* nation and she cannot go *back* to a place she has never even visited.

So Shahana rejects the idea of moving to Bangladesh and also the language. But why does Chanu insist? This can be interpreted as a sign of his fear of losing his identity. The Bengali language and history are two conveniently tangible aspects to which he clings.[268] In the context of the novel, this is just another possible reaction to living abroad. Sabine Blackmore claims:

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[268] Chanu is obsessed with English (and Bengali) literature. His fascination with English is rooted in his past: he studied English literature in Dhaka. Probably this was constructed to represent the fascination with the culture of the former colonizers, possibly also to represent a consequence of the British influence on the curriculum on the Indian Subcontinent. This connection to the colonial context is not made explicit, but it could be implied. Some of the texts he talks about he finds difficult to translate (cf. 43) from English to Bengali – possibly a sign for challenges of cultural transfer and for the transformative aspect of all translations. But as readers we read about it in English anyway. His choice of literature mirrors Chanu's growing distance from England and move towards a nostalgic/alienated representation/image of Bangladesh: while in the beginning he speaks of

> The poem "My golden Bengal" becomes not only the symbol of the journey back to an idealized Bangladesh, but also signifies the cultural/linguistic estrangement of Shahana [the somehow reluctant daughter] and Bengali as she drones the poem without any understanding of its (emotional and literary) value. In the paratext of the novel the reader is informed who provided the English translation of the poem and thus marks this part of the text as a translation in a traditional/conventional sense [...][269]

As Karim is – in addition to Shahana and Bibi – another character with Bengali heritage who grew up in England, Karim's use of language is also interesting to look at. Nazneen observes that Karim stammers in Bengali but not in English. "It was a strange thing, and it took her some time to realize it. When he spoke in Bengali he stammered. In English he found his voice and it gave him no trouble." (210) He dresses in jeans and T-Shirt, appears very self-confident (cf. 210), proclaims that he identifies with England ("This is my country." (212)) and is characterised as a British citizen who just happens to have parents from Bangladesh – at least in the beginning. Later on, we learn that Karim's identity is not that stable or unambiguous. As a reaction to discrimination and racism Karim ultimately rejects anything English and tries to find himself in radical Islamism. He goes as far as to leave England and move to Bangladesh (cf. 485). Karim tells Nazneen about how he got treated when he was a child or teenager – he still remembers the discrimination well – and he becomes enraged at many reactions after 9/11[270]. As a consequence of this new wave of discrimination, Karim decides to change his approach and uses more markers of difference on himself, e.g. he grows a beard and wears traditional Punjabi clothes. He gets increasingly radical and speaks Bengali more often. It is not marked sometimes which language he speaks when he and Nazneen are together, but in the end, when she breaks up, she notices this change:

> As he talked Nazneen realized that, though he was speaking Bengali, he was not hesitating. […] Had he lost his stammer? He had gained control of his speech, but she had lost control of hers. She blurted out: 'But you're not stammering anymore?' He widened his eyes, pretending to be shocked at being so rudely cut off. 'When I was a kid, I stammered. Now it only happens when I'm nervous.' […] She tried to compose herself. 'But do you only get nervous in Bengali? Why don't you stammer in English?' He raised his eyebrows. He stroked his beard. 'But I do. Maybe you don't notice in English.' (452-453)

Shakespeare and Dickens, he later only talks about Tagore. It parallels his retraction from England and concentration on a future in Bangladesh.

[269] Blackmore 2009: 8.

[270] The terrorists attacks of 7/7 have not happened yet. The novel ends in 2002.

But readers do not rely on Nazneen's comments only: they know about Karim's stammer through the depiction of Karim's direct speech, too: "N-no" (347) or "Y-y-your husband is right […] Y-y-yes, but t-t-too expensive." (211) In one particular case, Karim seems to feel uncomfortable because he confesses to Nazneen that he has never been to Bangladesh. He just looked up what "the life of a typical Bangladeshi village" was like online (347). This seems to question the identity he created in the Bengal Tiger context.[271] When Karim increasingly rejects his English identity and gets more involved with the Bengal Tigers and markers for Muslim or Bengali identity, he manages to master his Bengali language skills. His identity construction is closely linked to his use of language. It also highlights that cultural transfer or change does not have to result in assimilation to the host culture.

Bengali words which are not translated can be found all over the text. Some can be understood from the context, e.g. that *choki* means mattress (cf. 15 and 45), some are briefly explained, such as *Sadhus* (18), Hindu askets. The vast majority of them refer to clothing and food. Among the clothing vocabulary are words such as *purdah*, the veil, and *salwaar kameez*, a long shirt or dress (*kameez*) with pants (*salwaar*). Among the food vocabulary are words such as *parathas* (11), *samosas*, *bhajis* and *dal* (19) as well as *Shondesh* (82), *roshmolai, gulabjam, jelabee* (91) and *kalojam* (100). In both cases, food and fashion, readers who live in the UK will probably be familiar with the vocabulary.[272]

4.1.4. Concluding Remarks

Brick Lane presents the reader with the development of its protagonist Nazneen from an "unspoilt girl from the village" to an independent woman. She earns her own money and is not confined to limited options by her husband, the community she lives in or anybody's conventions. Nazneen has to deal with double discrimination. She is marginalized by the Bangladeshi community because she is a woman and by the British because of her ethnicity. Nazneen's change to more independence means that she neither assimilates to the British mainstream nor submits to the (misogynist) Bangladeshi community rules. However, it is suggested that her personal

[271] And in fact, somebody in a meeting questions his authority: "He seems to have forgotten his mother tongue." (352) Karim's mother tongue, though, is probably English. Bengali may just be his mother's language.

[272] Many expressions and words are used in British everyday language and thus an example for cultural exchange. While the British have exported English words to the Indian Subcontinent, the contacts with the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi culture have left their mark on English vocabulary, too.

development and change from the culture of submission and fatalism was only possible for Nazneen in the British context.

Work has a special role to play in this context. Financial independence is linked to increased self-confidence. In the end, Razia, Nazneen, Jorina and Hanufa open their own sari shop. With this shop, they are finally entirely independent from men – and they profit from the "exoticness"[273] trend in British mainstream culture (cf. 481). They design saris according to their customers' wishes and laugh about the unusual combinations and their young customers' willingness to spend more on the clothes than the four women think they are worth (cf. 480ff.).

The life stories of the migrants in *Brick Lane* differ in terms of generations and gender. The female characters make a success out of their life – in particular once they get rid of their husbands through death or migration – and the male characters fail: Chanu's dream of going to the UK and returning a rich man does not come true. The move to England means a loss of social status he does not recover from. Tariq and some other men in the area become drug addicts, Dr Azad suffers because of his horrible family, and Karim reacts to discrimination by becoming radical. In general, the outlook is more positive for the generation born in Britain, but again, it is rather the girls who receive a university education.

Due to the segregation – partly self-imposed, partly because this seems to be the only area in which the rents are affordable – and the fear of other people, there is only little exchange. There is not even a lot of contact and, for a change, it is the white Londoners who do not have a voice. The changes that Nazneen and her friends experience are linked to an implied empowerment through the new location, London. There are some signs of one-sided transfers though. While the Bangladeshis in London attempt to recreate their rules of social organisation in their communities, the rich Bangladeshis in Bangladesh attempt to copy a British life-style.

In large part, *Brick Lane* remains predictable and shallow. A young girl is married off to a much older man, comes to London, lives a limited and unsatisfying life, finds her own voice, learns English, finds a job and opens up because "[t]his is England [...] you can do whatever you like" (491) without facing the hardship Hasina has to put up with in Bangladesh. The UK is sold as the land of unlimited opportunities –

[273] Cf. Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.

given the right mindset.[274] The overly optimistic conclusion in the last sentence of *Brick Lane* fits the rest of the unconvincing novel.

The way the characters and their stories are represented is often problematic. *Brick Lane* employs a lot of stereotypes and stereotypical characters, such as submissive women, stupid village girls, bad working mothers and radical Muslims. The representation of Hasina is not convincing: it does not make sense that her command of language is so bad when it is understood that she writes in her native language. Her letters contribute to her characterisation as a naïve and even stupid Bengali village girl. Religion is represented as a source of immobility in some cases and as a way to radicalism in Karim's case. And references to the discourse on migration, culture clashes and assimilation are rather artificial, such as in the talks between Chanu and Dr Azad. With some goodwill one can read this as a statement against these sometimes detached discourses and for more action, but they stand out as odd and are unconvincingly stilted and artificial.

The reception of the novel was marked by lots of praise, but also by protests, in particular once the novel was to be adapted for the screen. Reviews that cater to middle-class readers and their expectations, such as the one by the British author Margaret Forster that is printed on the inside of the book – "It gave me everything I crave in a novel, taking me into a life and culture I know so little about" – encouraged a reading of the novel as an 'authentic' account of Bangladeshi life in Britain. This notion of 'authenticity' is problematic, of course. And the novel actually also makes fun of the contemporary interest in everything 'authentically' British Asian, such as in the case of the fashion Nazneen and her friends create and sell. Apparently, the protesters shared this kind of reading as an 'authentic' representation of South Asian communities in East London. However, the protests were blown up by some newspapers and blogs and originated from a very small group.

In contrast to the protests, *Brick Lane* also received a lot of praise. *The Guardian* is quoted on the back cover of the book with the following blurb: "The kind of novel that surprises one with its depth and dash; it is a novel that will last." I do not agree with this prognosis. I do not believe that it will survive the

[274] While Nazneen takes matters into her own hands and succeeds, Chanu is too passive and fails. His accusations of the British being racist are not verified. In the course of the novel, Nazneen – and with her the reader – finds out that things are not necessarily how Chanu describes and judges them. Thus, Chanu is characterised as unreliable and the reader is invited to question what he says, including the abovementioned allegations.

contemporary interest in British Asian fiction. I expect that due to its many aesthetic and narrative shortcomings, its predictability and stereotypical accounts, the novel will be forgotten when the interest in British Asian novels (based on the ethnicity of their characters and authors) ebbs away. But I have to agree with the assessment of *The Scotsman* (as quoted inside the book): the novel "opens up a new and potentially rich seam in mainstream British fiction". *The Scotsman* anticipated the bandwagon effect that can be observed in the literary market: the commercial success of *Brick Lane* paved the way for other (mainstream) British Asian novels. One such novel which aspired to more than the mainstream is Nadeem Aslam's Maps *For Lost Lovers*, the novel which I will analyse next in this thesis.

4.2. Nadeem Aslam's *Maps For Lost Lovers*: Religion as Obstacle to Cultural Exchange

4.2.1. Plot and Author

The Author: Nadeem Aslam

Nadeem Aslam is a critically acclaimed writer who lives in London. He was born in Pakistan in 1966 and moved to the UK when he was a teenager. In contrast to Zadie Smith, he is not such a public figure or as journalistically active as Gautam Malkani. He has given a few interviews, in which he talked about the writers he admires – British, Russian and Pakistani ones – , his interest in exploring "how certain outside processes – politics, public morality, etc. – interfere with everyday life and with basic human emotions"[275] and his attempt to create "every chapter of *Maps for Lost Lovers* […] like a Persian miniature".[276]

Nadeem Aslam also wrote the novel *Season of the Rainbirds* (André Deutsch, 1993) for which he won the Betty Trask Award (1994) and was shortlisted for the then still Whitbread First Novel Award, to name just the most important ones. He also wrote the novel *The Wasted Vigil* (Faber and Faber, 2008), set in cold-war Afghanistan, and the short story "Leila in the Wilderness" (Granta 112, 2010). Some of his novels were consecrated by British and international literary prizes and he has received a Lannan Literary Fellowship in 2005.[277]

The Plot

The novel is set in an English town which is renamed Dasht-e-Tanhaii by its immigrant inhabitants from the Indian Subcontinent. The novel's action occurs mostly in 1997, but also links back to the time of the British Raj, Indian partition and Bangladesh's independence.

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[275] Naeem, Raza. "Interview: Nadeem Aslam." *Newsline*. 3 June 2009. http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2009/06/interview-nadeem-aslam/ (accessed 29 July 2012).

[276] "In these miniatures, a small piece of paper – no bigger than a sheet of A4 – holds an immense wealth of beauty, colour and detail. Trees have leaves each perfectly rendered. Flowers are moments old and the tilework of the palaces and mosques is lovingly detailed. That was the aim in *Maps*..." (Procter, James. "Nadeem Aslam. Critical Perspective." *British Council*. 2008. http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth519d19600c41d29af0tixlc2ab2b (accessed 20 August 2012).)

[277] The Lannan Literary Fellowship was created in 1989 in the USA, but is not limited to US American writers. Fellows are suggested by "a network of writers, literary scholars, publishers, and editors". The fellowship is awarded to "writers of distinctive literary merit", "writers who have made significant contributions to English-language literature." ("Awards and Fellowships." *Lannan.org*. 5 July 2011. http://www.lannan.org/literary/awards-and-fellowships/ (accessed 9 September 2013).) See also: "Nadeem Aslam 2005 Lannan Literary Fellowship for Fiction." *Lannan.org*. 16 July 2011. http://www.lannan.org/literary/detail/nadeem-aslam/literary-award (accessed 9 September 2013).

At the centre of the novel is the Ask family, in particular the sixty-some year old father Shamas and his wife Kaukab. While Shamas is a liberal and non-religious artist who had to leave Pakistan because of his political writings, his wife Kaukab is a Muslim cleric's daughter and a deeply indoctrinated woman, who follows a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Their children Charag, Mah-Jabin and Ujala do not live at home any more, but come for a visit towards the end of the novel, when many conflicts break out or finally get talked about at a family dinner.

The first lost lovers mentioned in the novel are Shamas' younger brother Jugnu and his girlfriend Chanda. There are many rumours and suspicions that they were murdered by Chanda's brothers because the two lovers were not married and thus "lived in sin". The truth is revealed only at the end of the novel when Chanda's brothers confess that they have committed a so-called honour killing, even though they reject the court's verdict because they do not think they did anything wrong. The novel starts five months after Chanda's and Jugnu's disappearance and ends shortly after Chanda's brothers are convicted of the crime.

However, this is just one of many stories in the novel. The second main strand revolves around Shamas and the young mother Suraya, whose abusive and alcoholic husband divorced her. Suraya's family lives in Pakistan and in order to return to her husband and, much more importantly, to her son, according to Pakistan's Islamic law Suraya has to find a man who wants to marry her and then divorce her right away so that her former husband can remarry her. She seduces Shamas and they become lovers, but although he wants to help her, Shamas refuses to do so by marrying her. In the end, she finds somebody else, but as the reader has more information than the character, it is questionable whether she can go back to Pakistan. In the end, Shamas dies on his way to his Urdu bookshop *Safeena*, where he hopes to meet Suraya.

In addition to the stories above, the novel also tells many stories about Dasht-e-Tanhaii's inhabitants, in particular its segregated Pakistani community.[278] It is also a story about lost or impossible love, often due to restrictive rules and obstacles to mixed-ethnical or mixed-religious marriage or alternative forms of living together.

The main topics the novel explores are the danger of religion and religious institutions, misogynist rules and racism as well as the role of the artist in a

[278] Other groups, such as Hindus and Christians, do not occupy a lot of narrative space. The descriptions of their temple and church respectively are among the very few signs of their existence. People from England, the USA, Bangladesh and India are only marginally present.

community. Religion is a phenomenon the novel repeatedly deals with, in particular to criticise it as some kind of escape strategy and to criticise religious institutions which abuse their power, Christian and Muslim ones alike, e.g. because they promote violence in the name of faith (exorcism and honour killings), refuse to punish sexual offenders from their own ranks, or cut out people because they do not conform to their conventions. And finally, reasons for the failure of (or at least obstacles for) a truly multicultural society are identified, first and foremost segregation and racism among all communities involved.

The title "Maps for Lost Lovers" can be understood in various ways. Maps usually provide orientation. They also have the connotation of movement and travel and can be related to the migration of many of the characters. The use of the plural suggests that there can be more than one "map". For some the orientation might be provided by religion, for others it could be a different ideology or even forms of art. In the novel, however, none of the means of orientation works. The lovers remain lost.

Lost, in the novel, can refer to somebody missing, but also somebody dead – such as Chanda and Jugnu. It can also mean 'lost' as in having lost their way, a feeling shared by many characters in the novel, even Shamas.

And the 'lovers' refer to more than one couple. First of all, there are Chanda and Jugnu, the couple who becomes the victim of a so-called honour killing. Then there are Kiran and Kaukab's brother, who are not allowed to be married because she is a Sikh and he is a Muslim – he is even explicitly called her "lost lover" (281[279]). The two illegal immigrants, Kiran and Chanda's brother Chotta (cf. 284) and many lovers who face difficulties in songs and stories which feature in the novel are also part of the inventory. And finally, Shamas and Kaukab are also lost lovers. They were lovers once, but their love is lost.

In combination the title refers to a lack of orientation and suggests that love – although strong – cannot win against racism and hostile or inhuman communities. Love might still prevail, but the lovers die. The lovers share the fate that they are lost in the end. Shamas suggests at some point that the stories about struggling lovers – and in particular women who try to rebel against "intolerance and oppression" (191) to be with their loved ones – "become part of the universal story of human hope"

[279] The page numbers in this thesis refer to the Faber and Faber paperback edition published in 2004: Aslam, Nadeem. *Maps For Lost Lovers*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004. In this chapter as well as in the conclusion, the title *Maps for Lost Lovers* is abbreviated to *MFLL*.

(192). After the confrontation with all the stories and accounts in *Maps for Lost Lovers*, however, one cannot help but think him overly romantic and lost in a reverie.

4.2.2. History of Publication and Reception of the Novel

Maps for Lost Lovers was published in 2004 by Faber and Faber, one of the most important independent British publishers. Nadeem Aslam claims that he spent almost 12 years writing this novel.[280]

Maps for Lost Lovers was critically acclaimed. It won the Encore Award 2005 and the 2005 Kiriyama Pacific Rim Book Prize. It was shortlisted for the British Book Awards Decibel Writer of the Year (2006) and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in the same year. The novel was praised for its poetic, beautiful language – with the exception of one scene for which it was nominated for the Bad Sex Award.[281] In fact, Aslam's excessive use of imagery is at times distracting.

The novel was praised in many reviews. In her review for the *Guardian* Kamila Shamsie focuses on the power of love[282] while the review in *The Independent* emphasizes Aslam's talent for being at the same time very critical and able to show "great compassion".[283] *The Economist* focuses on the honour killings and draws parallels to potential honour killings under investigation in Britain (possibly 117 in 2004)[284]. The reviewer even compares Aslam to Salman Rushdie and states that: "It is so anti-clerical that it would be no surprise were the author to become the subject of a fatwa."[285] James Procter concludes that *Maps for Lost Lovers* feels "entirely new, whether viewed from the perspective of mainstream or minority fiction" […]

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[280] Cf. Brace, Marianne. "Nadeem Aslam: A Question of Honour." *Independent* 11 June 2004. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/nadeem-aslam-a-question-of-honour-731732.html (accessed 1 July 2011).

[281] It was nominated, but did not win. The *Literary Review*'s annual Bad Sex in Fiction Award went to *I am Charlotte Simmons* by Tom Wolfe. Cf. "The Bad Sex Awards 2004" *OutlookIndia.com*. 14 December 2004. http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?225978 (accessed 20 August 2012). See also: Ezard, John. "Award for Novel of Love and Racism." *The Guardian* 30 March 2005. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2005/mar/30/race.books (accessed 20 August 2012).

[282] "In this book, filled with stories of cruelty, injustice, bigotry and ignorance, love never steps out of the picture – it gleams at the edges of even the deepest wounds. Perhaps this is why the novel never gets weighed down by all the sorrows it carries: there is such shimmering joy within it, too. Here are characters hemmed in on one side by racism and on the other side by religious obscurantism, and yet they each carry remarkable possibilities within them." (Shamsie, Kamila. "All You Need Is Love." *The Guardian* 26 June 2004. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/jun/26/featuresreviews.guardianreview17 (accessed 20 August 2012).)

[283] Brace 2004.

[284] Cf. "New Fiction: Nadeem Aslam." *The Economist* 1 July 2004. http://216.35.68.200/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=E1_NRSGSPS (accessed 24 July 2011).

[285] "New Fiction: Nadeem Aslam." 2004.

"England is effectively orientalised. It is all achieved without the now familiar hybridity associated with certain migrant writers."[286]

Compared to other recent novels dealing with multicultural constellations, it is a rather uncomfortable read where conflicts dominate and people opposing the conventions of the Pakistani community get harmed or even killed. The novel paints a rather dark picture of contemporary Britain. It could not be much further away from "happy multicultural land". In addition, *Maps for Lost Lovers* is written in a rather complex style with many metaphors and references to other 'Western' and South Asian novels and stories. The novel is intricate, but at times also long-winded. These factors suggest that it is not a mass-market novel.

The cover, however, contradicts the content. The cover design uses markers of 'exoticness' such as mehndi tattoos on the 2004 paperback edition published by Faber and Faber. On a later cover (2005, Faber and Faber) we see autumn leaves and a woman dressed in a sari. Both, the 2004 and the 2005 editions use warm colours such as saffron and different shades of yellow and orange. As the marketing employs such images, it is complicit in the commodification of representations of marginalised communities.

Interestingly, Nadeem Aslam's following novel *The Wasted Vigil* received more attention than *Maps for Lost Lovers*. A reason for this is probably the fact that it is set in contemporary and cold-war Afghanistan and was published at a time of an increased public interest in the war in Afghanistan. *Maps for Lost Lovers*, however, was published after 9/11 and did not mention the attacks – which may or may not have been a disadvantage in the marketplace.

4.2.3. Analysis of the Representation of Cultural Exchange

4.2.3.1. Space and Time: Context, Migration, Contact Zones

The multiple reflector characters in *Maps for Lost Lovers* originate from different times and places, so that the novel encompasses a number of different settings and periods. The space and time references often refer to historical events or contexts, such as the British Raj in India, the civil wars and partitions on the Indian Subcontinent as well as the connected waves of migration to the UK from the 1950s to the 1970s. The main part of the novel is set in the North of England in 1997. In every period and space there are some representations of transfer and change,

[286] Procter 2008.

mediation or rejection, but the descriptions of the past also serve as an explanation for conflicts in the narrated present (i.e. 1997), in some cases above all for the characters' reasons to reject intercultural encounters and cultural exchange.

Time

The multiple stories and perspectives combined in the novel allow the reader to travel to different areas and periods. In order to arrange the analysis in a clear way, the different points in time will be arranged chronologically, although they are not ordered chronologically in the novel. The narration starts in January 1997, then there is an account of what happened five months before (Chanda and Jugnu disappear), followed by various retrospectives.

The earliest point in time the narration refers to is 1919, a time when the British Raj still ruled in India and when the British bombed India. The main character of this memory episode is Shamas' father, who lost his memory in one of the British bombings when he was outside with his sister. In the course of the story, he is found next to a shrine and then taken for a Muslim. He is renamed Chakor, but later remembers that his real name was Deepak and that he was actually Hindu. This involuntary 'conversion' has implications on his and his children's lives, as some people discriminate against them because they are not 'real Muslims', but "infected with Hinduism" (82) and thus not to be trusted (cf. 47 and 53ff.). The function of this section is to introduce one of the roots for Shamas' and Kaukab's conflicts as well as make a statement about racist attitudes in different periods and settings.

Chronologically, the next point in time is the period of partition and the massacres that followed Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan as well as a military coup in 1958 (cf. 80). These events are introduced as the reason for emigration to the UK for many people. Two specific cases in the novel are the migration of Kiran and her father – the rest of her family is killed in the massacres that followed Partition (cf. 10) – and Shamas and Kaukab (cf. e.g. 80ff.). A second important event in this context is the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Again, massacres and hatred are the represented results (cf. 82). Even many years later and in a different country, some of the stereotypes are still discernible, e.g. the comment that Bangladeshis are "treacherous and wicked" (349) with a reference to Bangladesh's fight for independence from Pakistan and their role in the end of Muslim rule on the Subcontinent. The characters' memories of their migration and

settlement in Britain provide an opportunity to make comments about other migrants and the community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii in general.

England, the country to which the Indian and Pakistani migrants travel, is not described as welcoming, to say the least: "It was 1978, and the cry in Britain was that immigrants should be sent back to the countries they had come from: *Just look in the telephone directory: there are thousands of them here now*" (28), the narrator explains. In addition, Shamas also remembers racist attacks and their negative impact: "There were violent physical attacks [...] Something died in the children during those years" (11).

The majority of the narration is set in 1997. This can be deduced from hints in the stories of the family members, how old the characters were in which year and how old they are now[287]. The novel opens with a scene set in January 1997, with Shamas 'welcoming' the first snow of the season. The novel also ends in winter, and welcoming the snow is one of the last things Shamas does. The circular structure implies repetition. Combined with the repeated love stories with unhappy endings, which are caused by social conventions based on a questionable understanding of religion, the novel paints a rather pessimistic picture and implies that the belief in change is a source of hope, but ultimately an illusion.[288]

Setting I: Dasht-e-Tanhaii

The novel is set in an English town, not in London where most of the recent 'postcolonial' novels are set. The migrant inhabitants of this town have renamed it Dasht-e-Tanhaii, "the Wilderness of Solitude, the Desert of Loneliness" (29). The name is allegedly the only thing the different immigrant communities could agree on (cf. 29). The original English name of the town is never mentioned. The re-naming of the town mirrors the colonial habit of claiming territory and reinforcing or voicing this claim by renaming the space. In this case, it is the migrant community who renames the town including its streets and landmarks and thus claims it to be their own (as opposed to belonging to the English): "numerous other places and roads have been given Indian and Pakistani and Bangladeshi names to give the map of this English town a semblance of belonging – amassing the claim on the place bit by bit"

[287] Cf. e.g. 26, 139, and 193. Charag was born approximately in 1965, Mah-Jabin in 1970 and Ujala in 1974.

[288] The young boy who decides not to hide any more but engage with his fellow human beings, as he calls them, makes the novel end on a slightly positive or at least hopeful note, but this cannot make up for the overwhelming number of references to segregation, discrimination and disappointment.

(156). The parallel to the renaming practices of parks, streets etc. by colonial invaders on the Subcontinent is made explicit.[289] The act of renaming is a process of cultural transfer, in this case an imposed one, mirroring English behaviour in the colonies. Jutta Weingarten sees a similar attempt in Shamas' effort to paint the rooms in his house in England exactly like the rooms in his parents' house in Pakistan: "The imitation and copying of the colonial situation is further taken from the macro-level of renaming the streets of the town onto the micro level in the form of the house Shamas and Kaukab live in."[290] Weingarten convincingly argues that this act mirrors colonialist behaviour, and she adds that it reproduces the "traumatic experience"[291] of a divided society at the same time.

The renaming of the streets and the painting of the rooms are not the only practices of appropriating space: claiming a space in the novel's community also works via graffiti. Similar to the "Pakis Rule" graffiti in *Brick Lane* (cf. *BL* 236) somebody in Dasht-e-Tanhaii paints over a National Front tag to read "NFAK RULES – Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan being the world-renowned Pakistani singer of Sufi devotional lyrics." (162) Thus, the racist tag is destroyed and the space reclaimed. In addition, somebody sprays "Fear your creator" on a lingerie billboard (cf. 347), thus enforcing the moral code of the community leaders (criticising the ad for showing too much skin and setting a bad example). And finally, in a different manner, lovers carve their names into the jetty near the lake – names in Urdu, Hindi, English that show that despite the chaperones and restrictive conventions, love relationships are possible[292].

Nadeem Aslam mentioned in one interview that the missing hints to Dasht-e-Tanhaii's original name and the exact geographic position should leave the reader as puzzled as the migrants when they arrived in the area. Even if one might recognize some aspects and try to map the town[293], the novel resists providing clear answers

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[289] The names of streets and parks in Lahore, Calcutta, Bombay – e.g. Goethe street – serve as examples for the strategy of naming and claiming spaces by the British (cf. 28).

[290] Weingarten, Jutta. "Traditional Claustrophobia – Intersections of Gender and Religious Identities in Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*." *eTransfers. A Postgraduate eJournal for Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies* 1 (2011). 6.

[291] Ibid.: 7.

[292] The names could belong to mixed couples or couples from all ethnic or other groups in the area – it is not mentioned explicitly. If not a reference to mixed couples, the different names could also be a hint at the universality of love – that no matter how many differences the communities think there are, they are all human beings who fall in love with someone.

[293] There are some aspects that hint towards Huddersfield (near Bradford and Leeds), such as the Iron Age fort and tower built for Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The reference to an Iron Age fort (and there are many in the UK) could also be a reference to heritage sites and history in general, possibly also a reference to England as a country with a long history of migration. The tower in the novel hints

and Dasht-e-Tanhaii remains a mystery.[294] This estrangement could indeed mirror the experience of the town's inhabitants. In any case, there is more than one town with a similar demographic structure in the UK and so Dasht-e-Tanhaii can stand for many places in Britain.

The fact that the town is called Dasht-e-Tanhaii, the desert of loneliness, within the realms of the Muslim and Pakistani community shows the shared negative connotations the migrants associate with their new home. The name already expresses the depression of the majority of its inhabitants and acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy – if the name of the town reminds the inhabitants every day of their loneliness, it does not make it easier to remain cheerful. Interestingly, their children call it "home" and refer to the Indian Subcontinent as "abroad" (46), so we can witness a change towards a more positive meaning, in spite of the depressing name.

The house of the Ask family plays an important role in the novel: it is one of the spaces in which religiously dogmatic and liberal worldviews clash. It is one of the few places in which contrary ideologies meet at all in an otherwise segregated environment. In contrast to the rather colourless descriptions of Dasht-e-Tanhaii, the house is a colourful oasis. Shamas has reproduced the colours and some of his parents' liberal order in his house in an attempt to recreate a feeling of home.[295] In addition to the colourful interior, the absence of the children, who were driven away by Kaukab's religious fervour, is striking. There are not even any pictures of the children on the wall, only verses from the Koran. This can be read as an example of Kaukab's influence on the family as she is the one responsible for the religious decoration, but also as an example for turning personal spaces in Dasht-e-Tanhaii into imitations of their home towns in Pakistan by reproducing the look and style.

The area in Dasht-e-Tanhaii in which the novel is set is described as a poor working-class area, inhabited by many factory workers (cf. 45, 80), illiterate and

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towards Huddersfield: "The site was developed as an iron age hill fort […] Perched on Castle Hill overlooking Huddersfield, the tower was completed in 1899 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign." (Kirklees Council. "Castle Hill and Victoria Tower." *Kirklees Council Website*. http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/events/venuedetails.asp?vID=45 (accessed 29 July 2011).) This location would make sense because of its location close to Bradford where resentment against immigrants has been reported (it is sometimes also called 'Bradistan' because of the large Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi population) and because it is situated in the North, a traditionally working-class area with a lot of unemployment and closed mines and mills (also referred to in the novel).

[294] Cf. Brace 2004.

[295] "One blue, one strawberry pink, one the yellow of certain Leningrad exteriors: these were the colours of the three rooms in the olive green house in Sohni Dharti – the small place in Pakistan where he was born and had lived permanently until his mid-twenties – and a few years ago, by mixing ground up chalk and rabbit-skin glue with the appropriate pigments, he had painted the rooms in this house with those three colours, surprising himself by reproducing the three shades precisely." (6)

unskilled people (cf. 296), taxi drivers and illegal immigrants (cf. 341). It has not always had a majoritarian South Asian population, but it has always been a poor area and thus a cheap place to settle for migrants. Those who can afford it are said to leave as soon as possible.

> The whites were already moving out of here by the end of the 1970s, and within the decade the Hindus became the first immigrant group to move out to the rich suburbs, followed slowly over the next few years by a handful of Pakistanis. Doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers – all have moved out of the neighbourhood and gone to the suburbs now, leaving behind the Pakistanis, the Bangladeshis, and a few Indians, all of whom work in restaurants, drive taxis and buses, or are unemployed. […] Shamas has insisted on remaining in this neighbourhood even though he can afford to move out to a better area. (46)

Shamas wants to transform the area into a better place, but he is not successful.

The descriptions of the area are dire: racism, depression, violence and crime, mental illness and radical youth are just some features (cf. 45f., 161f., 210f.). The health conditions are also bad: although Kaukab needs surgery urgently, there is no place at the hospital (cf. 278), and because of the overcrowded immigrant quarters and poor nutrition, tuberculosis has reappeared when the British authorities had thought that the illness was eradicated in the 1960s (cf. 161). A woman from the neighbourhood remarks:

> *[N]obody* deserves this rundown neighbourhood of one suicide attempt a year, 29 people registered insane, and so many break-ins in a month that the woman unplugs the video-recorder that had cost two-year's savings and brings it up to bed every night, and when she isn't lying awake waiting for the sound of a window downstairs, she is lying awake wondering where her two boys are because more and more of the burglaries are being done by the sons of the immigrants themselves, almost all of whom are unemployed. (46)

In addition to the above, the area is described as a segregated one, in particular along religious, but also ethnic lines. This segregation leads to obstacles for cultural exchange processes of which there are only very few. Kaukab "barely knew what lay beyond the neighbourhood and didn't know how to deal with strangers: full of apprehension concerning the white race and uncomfortable with people of another Subcontinental religion or grouping." (32) Kaukab does not have the wish to meet anyone from a different religion, culture or region, and thus forms a contrast to her husband who functions as a mediator between groups. The occasions on which Kaukab has contact with white people are very few – in fact so few, that she counts

them[296]. The lack of exchange and openness is not just a matter of the religion the characters are born into, but also a matter of (a lack of) education and class.[297]

Racism is an omnipresent problem in *Maps for Lost Lover* – on the side of the immigrants[298] as well as on the British side. While the white inhabitants of the town are only represented rarely, there are quite a number of references to racist attacks and attitudes from the whites against the South Asian immigrants.

In addition to the racism experienced in Dasht-e-Tanhaii, many immigrant inhabitants are said to link their experience of England to loss and loneliness.[299] Many immigrants are homesick. Kaukab feels "away from her customs and country" (270) – although if one looks at her daily life, the exchanges, her shopping and cooking habits, the conventions she applies inside and outside the house, one cannot help but wonder at this comment of hers because her customs at least are omnipresent. What Kaukab appears to miss most is her extended family: "the move to England had deprived her of the glowing warmth that people who are born of each other give out, the heat and light of an extended family." (31) However, Kaukab's image of a family is as biased as her religious devotion. Her children have not experienced family as something positive; they have left the house as soon as it was possible for them, because they could not bear Kaukab's strict religious rules and conventions and the permanent control[300]. For Kaukab, however, her dissatisfaction with Dasht-e-Tanhaii and England leads to a strategy of retreat to the home and to familiar things, conventions and religion. So she lives in the past, idealises Pakistan and her former family life – and is not interested in anything new. Kaukab creates her image of Britain in opposition to "good Muslim countries", such as Pakistan, Tunisia and Turkey. In the course of the novel, however, these countries are

[296] "The 'thank you' she murmurs to the flower-deliveryman is her third exchange with a white person this year; there were five last year; none the year before, if she remembers correctly […]" (69).
[297] Although those factors are represented to be connected: Mah-Jabin argues that the lack of education makes Kaukab more gullible (cf. 323) – and thus an easy target of religious indoctrination. For details see also 4.2.3.3.
[298] "[I]t being the neighbourhood curse to say may your son marry a white woman" (118). In addition, marrying a white girl is seen on the same level as having cancer (118). And parents threaten their children if they do not behave, to give them to white people (cf. 72).
[299] Many parents lament the loss of their children (cf. e.g. 45), and Shamas bemoans the loss of a season (cf. 5). "Loneliness" is mentioned 13 times, "lonely" 8 times throughout the novel.
[300] Charag complains: "the magnifying glass through which he was kept in sight was burning him" (128); Mah-Jabin "continues up the stairs, breaking free of the chains that her mother's words had briefly become around her ankles, head bowed like a lily on a broken stem." (116f.)

represented from a different perspective and described as unpleasant and hypocritical.[301]

Setting II: Pakistan

For many characters, Pakistan functions as a contrast to England. For Kaukab, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan embodies paradise: a Muslim country with religious and social rules she idealises.[302] She even actively manipulates stories or withholds information about Pakistan to make it appear more positive to prevent her children from finding reasons to criticise Pakistan and Kaukab's conventions.[303] Shamas thinks that many people look back nostalgically because they have trouble adapting to the new country and are not used to thinking as an individual, a result of the indoctrination many characters suffered in families and religious institutions that demanded obedience. "Most people live in the past because it's easy [sic!] to remember than to think. Most of us don't know *how* to think – we've been taught *what* to think instead." (282)[304]

However, other characters' perspectives function as corrections to the nostalgic and idealised image of Pakistan, e.g. the young immigrant girl who fled from Pakistan to lead a self-determined life. Even Suraya who often defends Pakistan against negative judgements reveals her pessimist concerns when Shamas offers to help her to pursue legal options to get her son back: "You've forgotten what Pakistan is like" (228). Another girl in the community "doesn't want to go to Pakistan for a visit because males and females are segregated there, 'Everything's divided into His and Hers as if anyone needed a reminder of what a great big toilet that country really is […]'" (45). And Mah-Jabin made her own sobering experiences when she agreed to marry a cousin and move to Pakistan when she was sixteen (cf. 300 and 306ff.).

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[301] In the case of Tunisia, Kaukab refuses to believe that Jugnu's white girlfriend could have got herpes there and claims that the friend must be lying to give a bad impression of Islam (cf. 44). And a young man travels to Turkey for a holiday – his parents are relieved that he goes to a Muslim country – but there are hints that he got killed there because somebody wanted to steal his British passport (cf. 264).

[302] Kaukab constantly defends Pakistan although her thoughts reveal that she is quite aware of the many restrictions, in particular for women. It seems as if following the rules and the learned order of "good" and "bad" so to speak made life easier for Kaukab.

[303] Kaukab is rather paranoid and suspects her children and husband of exploiting every opportunity to criticise Pakistan or Islam (cf. e.g. 37ff. and 304ff.).

[304] Cf. *Brick Lane:* Nazneen realizes at an early stage that she longs more for the carefree state of her childhood than the actual country Bangladesh: "but by now she knew that where she wanted to go was not a different place but a different time." (*Brick Lane*: 45) While she idealises her memories of Bangladesh in the beginning, in later stages she remembers above all some of the inconveniences.

A slight exception from the negative image of Pakistan is the representation of Shamas' family home in Sohni Dharti. It is described as a very happy place: Shamas' parents were apparently quite open and their house was a kind of haven in an otherwise prude or restrictive environment. However, the house could not protect Shamas against the government which persecuted critical artists and communists. After Shamas and his family leave, the house changes: Mah-Jabin's ex-husband keeps the house and reinforces religiously fundamentalist and misogynist rules.[305] This sub-plot can be read as a statement that everything stands or falls with individuals: even in Pakistan, Shamas' family was able to create an alternative space, so even in Pakistan nothing is just black or white and change is possible. On the other hand, the family were forced into exile because Shamas refused to assimilate to the government's ideology.

Migration

Both spaces are linked through the acts of migration and the migrants' families. There are many cases of migration – a transfer of people – in *MFLL*. Some of these movements are forced, some are voluntary. There are acts of legal as well as illegal immigration and the assessment by the characters differs from "worst mistake" to "life in England is much better than in Pakistan". The main direction of the migration efforts is a move from Pakistan to the UK, but there are also various cases of migration from India to Pakistan and vice versa during partition, from Bangladesh to Pakistan and vice versa in the 1970s. These migration processes are overshadowed by massacres.

Shamas' migration to the UK is a case of involuntary or forced exile and stands for many refugees' fate who could not continue their lives under the new governments[306]. Shamas was a poet and had to flee from the new government following the military coup in Pakistan in 1958[307] – and, like him, many characters in

[305] Mah-Jabin's husband is also represented to be a hypocrite: he throws out Chanda and Jugnu because they "live in sin", but the truth is that the visitors left because the host had tried to force Chanda to have sex with him, as he confesses later in a letter (cf. 307).

[306] The story of Shamas' and Kaukab's migration to the UK (cf. 80-85) starts with Shamas moving from a small town in Pakistan to the megacity Lahore – one of the biggest cities in Pakistan after Karachi –, where he experiences his political and sexual awakening (cf. 80). His political writing is one of the reasons why he has to leave the country.

[307] Even though his book is never published because the militias of the new government burnt the publishing house to the ground and Kaukab burned her wedding dress, where another "copy" of his verses was recorded. (cf. 80 and 142). The reader learns the following about Shamas' success as a poet: "The rumour in the publishing world in Lahore was that of any two rivals competing for the love

the novel had to go into exile because of political persecution. At the age of 26, Shamas flees to the UK and works in the "mills and factories around Dasht-e-Tanhaii" (80) until he is 31. In 1963, he returns to Sohni Dharti in Paksitan and marries Kaukab, but he moves back to England because he cannot find what he calls "meaningful employment" (80) in Pakistan. Kaukab follows Shamas to the UK at the end of 1965 with their first-born son Charag. Later, "today", so approximately in 1997, Shamas works for the Community Relations Council and is a well respected man in the community (cf. e.g. 368).

While the reader already knows that Shamas and Kaukab did not move back to Pakistan for good, they at least planned to do so several times.[308] Shamas would like to go back, take up writing poetry again and help to improve the country (154). The reason that Shamas could not find a meaningful job can be read as a negative representation of Pakistan, more concretely as hostility towards intellectuals and artists. Now after Shamas' retirement, Kaukab does not want to go back but stay "in hated England because her children are there" (60)[309]. This reason appears somehow odd, as the children have not come home for many years and Mah-Jabin lives in the USA. So one can read into this that Kaukab might be afraid not to fit into Pakistan any more or that she knows that her stories about Pakistan are nostalgic and biased.

There are some cases of illegal immigration. It appears inappropriate to call them 'voluntary', because the motives of these characters were that they wanted to live self-determined lives. So they were not exactly persecuted but still constricted. One of the illegal immigrants defends her decision in front of Chanda's sister-in-law: "I shouldn't have left? You lot who have legal status in a rich country don't know how lucky you are." (219) The story has another dimension: the illegal immigrants are not only threatened by the state and police to be deported, but they are even exploited and treated as objects by their own fellow countrymen. When Chanda's sister-in-law offers the illegal immigrant girl money if she played along to get Chanda's brothers out of jail by pretending that the girl came to the UK with

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and attentions of the same woman, the one who owned a copy of his book would have the upper hand." (80)

[308] "[O]ur time here was only meant to be temporary." (145) And they are not the only ones: "One woman tried to hold back her tears because she's beginning to realize that she would never be able to go back to live in her own country (she has started monthly payments for funeral arrangements at her mosque near her house), a country that's poor because the whites stole all its wealth, beginning with the Koh-i-Noor diamond." (45) "Stole", like the country "stole her daughter" (45).

[309] "There is nothing I loathe more than this country, but I won't go to live in Pakistan as long as my children are here." (146)

Chanda's and Jugnu's passports (cf. 180, 181, 182), the girl refuses and says: "You don't understand what things are like back there for most of us." (219)

Then there are some cases of voluntary migration: there is Jugnu, whose reasons for travelling and then settling in the UK seem more caused by the wish for education. His movement is rather represented as travelling; no political reasons are mentioned explicitly.

Kaukab's and Shamas' children are migrants, too, in a way. They flee from home to escape the suffocating conventions. Mah-Jabin migrates first to Pakistan – she asks her mother to arrange a marriage in Pakistan for her when she is only sixteen, lovelorn because the person she has a crush on marries somebody else – but regrets her decision later and accuses her mother of not having protected her. Mah-Jabin finds a way out of her unhappy marriage to a cousin and starts a new life in the USA, but she appears torn between the responsibility she feels towards her family and the new opportunities she has in another country. Ujala has left his parents long ago when he found out that a cleric had told his mother to put 'holy salt' into his food, something that he found out to be bromide that is also used to make prisoners compliant (cf. 304). He now rejects everything that he relates to the mosque or his parents. And Charag has moved to London – first to study and then to live his life as an artist, free of the constraints of Dasht-e-Tanhaii.

Contact Zones

If everything is so segregated, are there any contact zones at all? Is there any transfer or exchange? And what role do institutions play in this context for cultural exchange? There is little contact between hosts and immigrants or among different immigrant communities in Dasht-e-Tanhaii. However, when Charag moves to London, the university context as well as the metropolis open up new possibilities, a contrast to the small, poor and little-educated area in the North. Contact is not represented as a generational issue only, it is also an issue of space and education.

Two additional institutions that play a role in connection to cultural transfer are the Community Relations Council and the religious institutions in the area. At the Community Relations Council, Shamas is said to provide "help and advice every day in negotiating a path through their life in England." (190) Shamas also claims that some acts of violence against women in the community could have been prevented had the council existed earlier (cf. 15). So on the one hand, Shamas helps the

community to deal with the English institutions etc. On the other hand, however, the Council does not establish contact, it makes contact between the Pakistanis and the English almost unnecessary, because Shamas takes care of them. Even if he just tells them what to do and which forms to fill out, it puts them in a rather passive role, which would also fit the picture of this specific community, where people constantly appear to be looking for somebody to tell them what to do.

The religious institutions in Dasht-e-Tanhaii are among the institutions which rather discourage exchange: they share the metaphor of 'maintaining purity'. The church and the mosque e.g. also have in common that they cut out people who act against the dogmas (cf. 247) – with the pretext of wanting to help them. In general, although there is hatred among the religions, they have a lot in common. A rather dire parallel is also the child abuse in the mosque that must trigger associations with similar cases in catholic churches. The mosque, the Ram and Sita Temple, and the St Eustace church are represented along similar lines. So there is no exchange but a similar set-up.

In addition to the above, the family has the potential to serve as a contact zone. One example of forced transfer is Kaukab's establishment of Pakistani or Islamic conventions and rules. Another situation in which Kaukab's and Shamas' house serves as contact zone are the two dinners – one with Jugnu's girlfriend, condescendingly called "the white girl" by Kaukab, and the other with the children that leads to the clash between the different ideologies, i.e. Kaukab's deep religiosity and Shamas' and the others' commitment to science and rationality.

There are a number of spaces throughout the novel that are not observed by the watchdogs of the religious community. Such hidden spaces serve as meeting points for lovers in complicated relationships, e.g. a Muslim girl and a Hindu lover (cf. 85f.). In addition, there is Shamas' Urdu bookshop, the Safeena, set on the outskirts of the town near the lake; it is not under observation (that is at least what Shamas thinks until he is beaten up and blackmailed); it is a space for speaking freely, reading political and other forbidden literature and doing things that are prohibited in the community. The Safeena also hosts the performance by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan which brings together the different characters: different age groups, people interested in art (poetry and music) as well as those who come for the religious aspect of the performance. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is also said to be

successful in the UK in general; his music and performances are commodities that are not only bought by South Asian immigrants (cf. 184).

However, in spite of the segregation, cultural transfer is represented in *MFLL*, albeit a different kind of cultural transfer than expected: it is not so much a reciprocal exchange or an assimilation of the immigrants, it is rather the attempt to transform English space according to Pakistani models. To some extent this enterprise is successful: there are Pakistani shops in the town, you can get along well without knowing any English, there is no need to "mingle" with the host culture. As Urdu – and possibly also other Pakistani languages – are understood to be the default languages in the novel and explicit markers are used for the use of English, such as during the dinner with Jugnu's white girlfriend, one can see that the use of Urdu outnumbers the use of English to a large extent. In addition, there are Punjabi loudspeaker announcements at the bus station (cf. 45), and the sermons at the mosque are transmitted via loudspeakers (cf. 45), so that some characters are said to feel like 'back home'. Furthermore, there is the already mentioned claiming strategy of re-naming English places and streets.

What is the effect of such a representation? The segregation practices and the assessment of the characters encourage the reader to think of the community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii as a "parallel society", buzz words in the debates on migration and multiculturalism. There is cultural transfer, but not as much in the sense of reciprocal exchange.

And although British racism against immigrants is mentioned, the impression prevails that the segregation is the choice of dogmatic people like Kaukab. This impression prevails among other things because the rejection is mentioned much more often and in detail by the characters, while white racism is only shortly mentioned on scattered occasions. The representations of Pakistan as "a poor country, a harsh and disastrously unjust land" (9) and the English setting as segregated and unwelcoming create a dark atmosphere.

The prevailing spatial segregation in Dasht-e-Tanhaii leads to a very limited number of contacts, thus making cultural exchange difficult. And the lack of exchange is represented as something negative, as many characters suffer from the strict community rules and the permanent surveillance and social control. Cultural

transfer, however, in the sense of importing Pakistani ways of social organisation to the UK is more successful.

The difference between metropolitan and rural areas is important to consider but it is not commented on much in the novel. Kaukab and many other members of the Pakistani community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii are said to come from Sohni Darti, i.e. a small town. They migrate to a bigger city in the UK (even though it is not London, it is much bigger), so their feelings of loneliness and strangeness might not only result from the fact that they travelled to a different country. At no point is this change of environment addressed, maybe the characters are not meant to be aware of it themselves. Shamas, on the other hand, had lived in Lahore, the second biggest metropolis in Pakistan, and this might be another explanation – in addition to his different level of education and his open-mindedness – for his comparatively fewer problems with arranging his life in Dasht-e-Tanhaii.

The negative representation of religion and conventions in the segregated Pakistani community encourage a reading of cultural exchange and cultural change being desirable between host culture and immigrants. In particular, the shedding of religious conventions and a move towards more individualism and religion as private enterprise (if at all) is advocated by likable characters such as Shamas – as well as by negative examples of the effects of religious dogmas (e.g. in Suraya's case of humiliation). Thus, the novel promotes a set of 'Western' ideals and suggests that they were the desirable norm.

The novel, however, creates rather clear-cut oppositions between the camps, almost to the extent of caricature. It seems to mirror or at least take up a debate on the ideals of the Enlightenment (represented through Shamas), i.e. that Muslim cultures still need to go through that "phase" and develop a more rational approach towards religion. Also, the novel seems to suggest through its characters that it has to be one or the other, not so much a harmonious consolidation of different elements. Only Ujala voices once that the political idealism of his father – who is more concerned about the future than the present – and the reactive religious dogmatism of his mother are both to be rejected (cf. 324). There is a lack of positive role models in the sense of characters who manage to find happiness and live in harmony with their various identities.

4.2.3.2. Narrative Transmission and Characters: Conflicts and Mediators

The novel is narrated by a third person narrator, who remains in the background while the characters function as reflectors. Every chapter starts with a first sentence that evokes a character, such as "Kaukab looks out of the window […]" (30) or "Shamas doesn't remember […]" (48)[310], and in the vast majority of sections, the following chapter is narrated through the eyes and mind of that very character. These introductions as well as formulas such as "thinks a woman preparing dinner" (46) reveal whose thoughts the readers are confronted with.

The most privileged perspectives are the ones of Shamas and Kaukab. Usually there is one focaliser for each chapter, but there are two exceptions: in one chapter, Suraya's and Shamas' perspectives alternate and thus accelerate the speed of narration. This happens when Suraya tells Shamas the truth about her plans and culminates in her telling him that she is pregnant. The second interesting case of increased alternation is the family dinner – that could no doubt be called a 'showdown' – during which the perspectives change quite a lot and the pace is accelerated immensely. The effect is in both cases an intensification of the notion of a clash. However, this also leads to some situations in which it remains unclear whether the thoughts are uttered by the narrator or a character.

The distance between the narrator and the characters varies. There are some scenes where there is less distance, such as in the case of Kaukab's dinner preparations[311]. However, there are also passages where the insight seems less immediate. The distance between the narrative instance and the characters, however, does not correlate with the distribution of sympathy. A passage with little distance cannot automatically be evaluated as approval of the communicated ideas, ideologies or thoughts.

The readers' sympathies throughout the novel remain primarily with Shamas while Kaukab mainly functions as a contrast to his perspective: he is the enlightened poet and politically active – sometimes even more than is good for him –, she is the backward-oriented religious fundamentalist who always feels like a victim of fate or her father's and husband's decisions. However, Kaukab is not represented as entirely

[310] "Mah-Jabin's train […]" (91), "Charag steps into the lake, naked […]" (122), "Kaukab feels herself being watched from above." (259) etc.

[311] The section in which Kaukab is getting ready for dinner with a "white person" carries many markers of immediacy, such as interjections ("Allah, the pores […]" (35), questions ("Too much?" (ibid.)), or thoughts added in brackets (cf. ibid.). And when Suraya thinks that Allah has forgotten the women when he made his laws, her secret thoughts she wishes to suppress are revealed in italics (cf. 150).

negative. In a number of instances in which the narrator grants insight into Kaukab's feelings, fears and thoughts, it is possible to feel empathy and compassion for Kaukab.[312] Her deeds, however, and her inability to change her ways even though she harms her own children, give ground to criticise her. Both perspectives, Shamas' and Kaukab's, work well as contrasting points of view. But they also represent larger groups within the community.

All in all, the novel is narrated from a variety of perspectives, e.g. the three Ask children Mah-Jabin, Charag, Ujala, Chanda's parents and brothers, Suraya, Kiran and finally there are also some short passages in which other community members briefly work as reflectors.

Which ethnicities, age groups, gender and nationalities are represented? And is one group privileged? The majority of the characters in *Maps For Lost Lovers* belongs to the town's Muslim Pakistani community. Among them are some characters who migrated to the UK themselves as well as their family members who were born in the UK. Most space is devoted to the generation of Shamas and Kaukab, but their children Charag, Mah-Jabin and Ujala have their appearances as well. The perspectives of the children are used to represent the struggle with the restrictive rules dictated by some parents and the community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii. It is the children's generation who looks hardest for alternatives, e.g. concerning gender conventions[313] and the role of religion[314] for a community. They more than others express their feelings of being torn between cultures and family obligations and the feeling of injustice; often only spatial distance allows them to find opportunities to express themselves and find peace. However, compared to the space devoted to Shamas' and Kaukab's perspectives, the children's perspectives carry less weight in the novel. This adds to the feeling that there is only limited choice: either you have to leave Dasht-e-Tanhaii if you want to lead a life unobstructed by the community's restrictive rules – such as Mah-Jabin and her brothers did – or you face dire consequences – such as Chanda and Jugnu or the Muslim girl with the Hindu lover who all got killed.

[312] Cf. e.g. the passages in which she reveals that she feels lonely and overwhelmed because she does not know how to navigate in England (cf. 40), or situations in which she wonders whether her idea of raising children has harmed her sons and daughter (cf. 308).
[313] Above all: Mah-Jabin (divorce and change of appearance) and Charag (vasectomy).
[314] In particular Ujala, who reads the Koran in English to be able to discuss it (cf. 322) and Charag, who picks up on violence done in the name of religion in his art (cf. 320).

There are some references to characters from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the UK. There are almost no white characters in the novel, and if they are mentioned at all, it is only briefly and in reference to racist attacks. Exceptions are Charag's ex-wife Stella and "the white woman", i.e. Jugnu's girlfriend in the past. In terms of religion, the majority of the characters is Muslim, but some are Hindus and Sikhs and there are some references to the Anglican church. For the majority of the characters, their religion is a defining identity marker, followed by their regional origin, even more so than their nationality. The main oppositions run along national, ethnic, gender, religious and generational lines.

The effect of such multiple perspectives could well be a statement against the often homogenised representation of immigrant communities in contemporary British novels and discourse. All those perspectives, however, do not paint a multifaceted picture of Dasht-e-Tanhaii. The inventory can be split up into three groups: the religious fundamentalists (often represented through Kaukab), the artists and idealists (mostly represented through Shamas and the absent Jugnu) and the pragmatic ones (above all the so-called second generation immigrants, but not all of them).

Which conflicts can be deducted from the inventory and constellation? The analysis of the character inventory and the characterisation reveals potential mediators as well as conflict potential between characters or groups, in this case conflicts that might obstruct cultural exchange. The characters are relatively homogeneous in terms of their national origin and ethnicity, but reveal differences in terms of their ideals and understanding of identity, in particular concerning the role of religion and the relation between individual and community. One opposition in this context is the one between intellectuals or artists and religious characters, the other opposition works between the parent generation and their children in some cases. Differences in education and class also play a role.

While some characters, in particular the educated ones and the ones born in Britain (the younger generation) are represented as embracing aspects of British culture and aspects of social organisation, others, in particular the less educated immigrants, are represented as deeply confused. The latter group is depicted as clinging to an idealised image of Pakistan in terms of religion, social hierarchies, ideals about how to raise children etc. They reject anything British as a consequence. Some characters are even described as racist. This does not mean that exchange is

made impossible, but not as easy and not as obvious to trace. The constellation develops its full potential because of the extreme contrasts between the characters, e.g. Shamas and Kaukab, or Kaukab and her children. However, as mentioned above, the many perspectives do not create a multifaceted community-image but rather group the characters into ideological camps.

Among the opposing constellations is e.g. the one between South Asians (even those who are born in Britain) and white British: the latter calls the first one names, such as "darkie" or "Paki"[315], the South Asians fear that contact with "the whites"[316] could corrupt them. Furthermore, there is an opposition between the parents (immigrants) and their children who were born in the UK, in particular those children that choose not to follow their parents' rules blindly.[317]

Throughout the novel there are innumerable cases of binary structures such as male and female characters, mostly in the context of misogynism. Additional divides exist along class and religious lines, the most prominent example being Shamas, Jugnu and Charag – educated and secular – versus Kaukab and the majority of the other immigrants – uneducated, unskilled and very religious.[318]

In the murder trial at the end of the novel two systems clash: the English legal system and the allegedly Pakistani and Islamic view of what is right and wrong. While the honour killing is applauded by relatives of the two murderers in Pakistan as well as by people in the mosque, Chanda's brothers are convicted by an English court in the end. While the court enforces the English law, the two brothers still remain convinced that they did the right thing by their community's standards. There is no appropriation or even understanding or acceptance of the set of binding laws in their country of residence.

On the one hand, the characters are constructed to form oppositions, e.g. very religious ones and atheist ones. On the other hand, the characters also have a couple of things in common, e.g. that they are all parents (Chanda's parents as well as Kaukab and Shamas); that they understand that one can be in love before

[315] For Kiran's experience see page 283.
[316] A large group of immigrants frequently uses the definite article in order to express generalisation.
[317] This leads to many parents feeling that their children were "corrupted" or "stolen" by the UK (cf. e.g. 61 and 45). Kaukab complains: "this accursed land has taken my children away from me. My Charag, my Mah-Jabin, my Ujala. Each time they went out they returned with a new layer of stranger-ness on them until finally I didn't recognize them any more." (146) [sic!]The children, on the other hand, criticise their parents – Ujala calls them "you lot" (304 and 321).
[318] There are no educated religious people in the novel – a statement that perpetuates a stereotype.

marriage[319]; that they all know fear and loneliness. However, in the end, the differences outweigh the empathy or similarities and the novel's tone remains gloomy.

Does the constellation and characterisation reveal which characters are mediators? Shamas is explicitly called a mediator in the sense that he brings people together or helps them to cope:

> They cannot speak English themselves and are among the many people who require Shamas' help and advice every day in negotiating a path through their life in England. At his office, he and his staff have to explain various procedures to men and women who are unemployable in two languages, loathed in several, who know no English or are too intimidated to walk up to someone white-skinned for help. (190)

At the same time, however, his 'help' leads to even less contact between South Asian and (white) British characters. Through Shamas' involvement, such contact is no longer necessary.[320] Nevertheless, there are also instances in which he brings people together: he helps with interactions between individuals or between immigrant groups, such as in the case of the pig's head in front of the mosque, he goes to the Hindu temple to see if everything is alright (cf. 14, 15, 19). Shamas also consoles the bus driver and asks him to report the racist abuse (179). Apparently, he has quite different ideas of politics, religion and social life from Kaukab, but interestingly, he is not pictured as trying to convince her to change. However, he has taken care that his children are not raised under strict religious rules.

Kaukab is also a mediator, but in a different sense. She imported her rules of social organisation and religion to the UK and – with the help of many other immigrants – has turned a part of Dasht-e-Tanhaii into a Pakistani enclave. The way this is narrated encourages the reader to think of it as a parallel society – even if this may not entirely fit the sociological definition. Mah-Jabin accuses her mother of

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[319] Kaukab "had been thinking that the family would have forgiven the couple [Chanda and Jugnu], that the parents would have remembered that everyone loved someone before marriage, love being a phenomenon as old as Adam and Eve. Women joked among themselves: 'Why do you think a woman cries on her wedding day? It's for the love that this marriage is putting an end to for all eternity. Men may think a woman has no past – "you were born and then I married you" – but men are fools.'" (64) Despite this revelation and the proverb, Chanda and Jugnu are not spared but killed.

[320] Cordula Lemke makes a similar argument (cf. Lemke, Cordula. "Racism in the Diaspora: Nadeem Aslam's Maps for Lost Lovers (2004)." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Eckstein, Lars, Barbara Korte, Ulrike Pirker and Christoph Reinfandt (eds). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 174). I do not agree, however, with her allegation that Shamas does this on purpose "to support his community in an 'us versus them' situation." (ibid.) Altogether, while some of Lemkes critical observations are interesting contributions to the still small number of secondary literature on *MFLL*, a number of her claims about different forms of racism on the plot- as well as the meta-level are not entirely convincing.

having dragged her traditions along "like shit on [her] shoes" (114). This does not refer to the passing on of 'exotic' food recipes, but in Mah-Jabin's case in particular to the blind acceptance and perpetuation of rules that discriminated above all against women. A further aspect of Mah-Jabin's accusation is that her mother has not even attempted to change discriminating aspects that she herself has suffered from in a country that could have offered relative freedom.

Stella acts to some extent as a mediator when she shows Charag that there are alternative ways to live – e.g. she frees him from the fear that one mistake could mean the end of the world (cf. 126 and 128). But in general there is not so much contact between the various groups (English and Pakistani, educated and non-educated, old and young etc.) and even if there is contact, their lives are presented to be rather separate.[321] Kaukab tries to convince her children and husband to assimilate to her ways, but Shamas and the children do not attempt to change Kaukab's views and practices.

As the title of the novel suggests, there are no maps, no orientation. There is a lack of mediators and role models who could reconcile the parties. And the family functions as a microcosm in the novel, a setting for clashes and unsuccessful mediation. The conflicts that the individual family members face – and they are often rather portrayed as types, no matter how much detail is put into their description – can be observed in the world outside the family, too.

Transfer and cultural (ex)change are assessed as something negative by the majority of community members, often represented through Kaukab. The loss of purity[322] and the fear of divine condemnation are the explicitly mentioned arguments based on religion, while the fear of losing one's orientation in an unknown and hostile country is implied[323]. Fear and loneliness are recurring themes. They are the reasons given for many community members to retreat to their own shut-off community, to retreat to what they know[324]. There are attempts to explain the

[321] "Talking with Kaukab is, for both of them, frequently another way of being alone, the conversation highlighting the separate loneliness of each." (156)
[322] Cf. 40 and 267.
[323] One explicit case is the chapter called "In Darkness" where Jugnu's white girlfriend visits Kaukab and Shamas for dinner. As they often speak English at the table and advance views that privilege rationality and science over religion, Kaukab feels excluded: "she herself – and everything that she stood for – was excluded […]" (37).
[324] Kaukab, representing the majority of Dasht-e-Tanhaii's Pakistani community, has this idea in her head that 'the whites' as well as her non-religious husband just wait for another chance to discredit Islam or the Pakistani community or both. This paranoia is one of the reasons why there is so much rejection, and it is implied that this fear results from insecurity and indoctrination. So while the novel

segregation – e.g. voiced by Mah-Jabin about her mother[325] – but ultimately it is still condemned, not least because it leads to such things as the honour killing, torture leading to death called exorcism and discrimination against women.

Characters such as Shamas, Jugnu and his children seem to engage in exchange[326]. As the likable characters advocate more openness and "mix and match" themselves, exchange and appropriation is valued more positively than the segregation approach of the other characters who resist such exchange.

4.2.3.3. Phenomena of Social Organisation and Practice

Segregation, Racism, Mechanisms of In- and Exclusion

The communities described in *Maps for Lost Lovers* live in a strictly separated environment. The segregation mainly takes place along ethnic, religious and class lines.

On the one hand, there is racism of white people directed against immigrants from the Subcontinent and their families (based on otherness – possibly simply just based on their darker skin colour). While the white inhabitants of the town are only rarely "present" in the story, there are quite a number of references to racist attacks and attitudes from the whites against the South Asian immigrants. One of the very few representations of 'white Britain' can be found in the narrator's (or Shamas') résumé of the changes in attitude towards immigrants:

> It was a time in England when the white attitude towards the dark-skinned foreigners was just beginning to go from *I don't want to see them or work next to them* to *I don't mind working next to them if I'm forced to, as long as I don't have to speak to them*, an attitude that would change again within in the next ten years to *I don't mind speaking to them when I have to in the workplace, as long as I don't have to talk to them outside the working hours,* and then in another ten years to *I don't mind them socializing in the same place as me if they must, as long as I don't have to live next to them*. (11)

So although there is change, the attitude remains racist. There are even reported calls that "immigrants should be sent back" (28). This frightens the South Asian diaspora

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gives no excuse for such behaviour and criticises this parallel community, there are various hints or attempts to shed light on some of the reasons for this kind of behaviour.

[325] "If mother is uneducated there are reasons. […] If she is the way she is, it's because she has been through what she has been through." (323) In a way Mah-Jabin is defending Kaukab, but it is also a condescending remark. This remark implies that Kaukab was born stupid, had no education, lived all her life in a restrictive community and is thus not able to think for herself or change for the better. Mah-Jabin claims the right to judge her mother along with a higher (class) position.

[326] The stories linked to these characters display a combination of different cultures, styles and fashion. Their stories show them advocating individual positions instead of a collective community ideology.

as they remember a similar experience in Uganda, even those characters who were not affected themselves:

> the heart of every woman in the neighbourhood sinks whenever there is an unscheduled 'newsflash' on TV, making them think the government is about to announce that all the Asian immigrants are to be thrown out of Britain, just like they had been expelled out of Uganda two decades ago (46).[327]

Among the references to British racism – and thus an obstacle to cultural exchange processes – are verbal abuse and physical assaults. For instance, Kaukab is insulted when she called a wrong number once (cf. 297), white British boys insult a Pakistani bus driver (cf. 178)[328], and – in a different context – Kiran finds out that a boy at school did not want to go out with her because in his eyes she was a "darkie" (283).[329]

There are also various physical assaults in the novel: somebody's son is "beaten to death in a racial attack by the whites" (160) – not just some whites, but "the whites" as Kaukab remembers. One of Chanda's brothers gets beaten up in jail by white inmates (cf. 169), and Chanda's mother remembers some statistics she had heard on the radio: "twenty black people died in police custody last year" (174), which can be read as a reference to or as an accusation of institutionalised racism.

On the other hand, the Pakistani community in the novel circulates negative stereotypes against the British, immigrants from different regions on the Subcontinent and against people of different faith.[330] To Kaukab and many other immigrants, England is a "strange place" (270) and the English a "vice-ridden, lecherous race" (44) with "disgusting habits and practices" (267).[331] Kaukab is obsessed with maintaining what she calls her "purity" and judges England to be dirty and the English people to be filthy and contagious, among other things because of their 'lack of morals'. In Kaukab's opinion, it is her religion that demands her to

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[327] There is no mention of 9/11 and xenophobic reactions as the novel is set prior to both 9/11 and 7/7.
[328] Shamas gets calls by racists because of his work (cf. 208), a man in the street shouts "Sieg Heil" (174) when passing a Pakistani shop. In the bus a passenger reprimands the bus driver: "Show us some respect. This is our country, not yours." (178) And a white boy stole his dead mother's heart "from the hospital just because he didn't want it to be transplanted into a black man's body." (153)
[329] "The word "Paki" wasn't invented until the 1970s, otherwise he would have used that." (283) This ironic remark is a comment that not only identities, but also racism is a construct.
[330] Kaukab "barely knew what lay beyond the neighbourhood and didn't know how to deal with strangers: full of apprehension concerning the white race and uncomfortable with people of another Subcontinental religion or grouping." (32) She says herself: "I don't go there often – white people's houses start soon after the street, and even the Pakistanis there are not from our part of Pakistan."(42)
[331] They find it deplorable because its inhabitants are unreligious (cf. 30), and many blame the country for their children's rudeness and different life style (e.g. 300ff.). Kaukab hears a woman complaining that England is a "loathsome country that has stolen her daughter from her, the disobedient girl" (45).

keep this kind of fragile inner purity. She instrumentalises her faith to remain separated from the English and not engage in cultural exchange.[332]

However, the segregation does not work along ethnic or religious lines only; it also works along class lines and educational differences.[333] The residential areas in Dasht-e-Tanhaii are separated into streets for well-off people, working-class and unemployed people. The area in which Shamas and Kaukab live is one of the poorest areas with mostly factory workers, taxi drivers and unemployed inhabitants (cf. 46). In addition to the spatial segregation there is also contempt: a rich Pakistani woman expresses her rejection of lower-class immigrants and accuses "them" – in this case Kaukab and the others – of giving the British a negative image of immigrants due to arranged marriages, weddings between cousins and honour killings.

The majority of the people in the area – in particular the parent generation – is uneducated and religiously indoctrinated. Shamas and Kieran's father are the only intellectual immigrants which are explicitly mentioned. Kaukab got her education from the mosque. She regrets that she never got a better education, but does not have the impulse to improve things for her own daughter. This is one of the things that Mah-Jabin accuses her of.

There is some social and spatial mobility, in particular once the level of education improves. Some inhabitants get better jobs and leave the area – or they leave for university or other education and do not move back. Those who stay generally do not move up.[334] Charag, for example, moves away to London to attend the university. So although the situation could be better, education is a way up and out for some.

The segregation in the novel is described as a chosen segregation. Kaukab and many others choose not to mingle with "the whites"[335] or other people with different religions or ethnic roots. They fear being "infected" by their different way of life. And to reinforce the separation the children get indoctrinated. Kaukab e.g. tells Charag: "the differences between the whites and the Pakistanis were too many for interaction to successfully take place; many marriages ended." (126) If children

[332] Kaukab even has different sets of clothes she puts on when she has to confront the outdoor world.
[333] And then again, there are animosities between different groups who had conflicts back on the Subcontinent, e.g. because of the Partition and civil wars, but probably also related to the caste system, as there are cases of racism against people of a different – i.e. darker – shade of black (cf. 82).
[334] Kaukab criticises that Shamas chose not to move away to improve their children's chances. Kaukab claims this worsened Mah-Jabin's chances on the marriage market and caused a lack of role models for the boys.
[335] Except for Stella, there are no white characters with names, only racist incidents are mentioned.

contradict their parents, the parents put the blame on England for corrupting their children.

With all this segregation, are there still contact zones? Shamas attempts to create contact zones to enable exchange and provide help with his work at the Community Council and the Safeena (with mixed results). The religious institutions – the church, mosque and temple – as represented in the novel fail to provide contact zones. There is racist abuse at the English school, the headmistress of a religious girl school sends her own daughters to a British co-educational school instead of improving her own school, and the religious communities enforce their traditional rules and interpretations of the Scripture without compassion or charity.

Social Organisation and Practices within the Pakistani Community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii

The narration focuses on the Pakistani community and in particular the Ask family. Families play an important role in *MFLL*. They are microcosms in which traditions are passed on and conventions are enforced. A lot of the traditions, practices and rules of social organisation in the novel are based on religion. This is at least what those community members assert who also claim the right to interpret the Koran and judge what is right and wrong. In many instances, the difference between religion and tradition is blurred. While the practices somehow originate from a religious context, they are not necessarily based on the Koran. The same holds true for references to Islamic law. It remains unclear whether these references are to the Koran or to an interpretation of institutions of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In these cases, neither the narrator nor the characters explain the origin of the respective practice. The reader is left puzzled, which could be an intended effect.

The inclusion in and exclusion of characters from the community is based on whether they obey the rules. While Jugnu is well respected and *the* role model for everybody's children at the beginning, he gets stigmatised and isolated after his relationship out of wedlock to Chanda. But who makes the rules? Mostly, the characters refer to cultural practices they imported from Pakistan – and the narrations from Pakistan reveal that Islamic clerics and Islamic judges were the ones to define correct behaviour (and tried to justify it through religion). The local mosque in

Dasht-e-Tanhaii also provides "guidance".[336] And who controls whether the rules are obeyed? In *MFLL*, the whole community functions as a surveillance apparatus. The results can be devastating and lead e.g. to death by stoning. In less dramatic cases, the gossip many characters spread can still cause others to lose their status and reputation, which then has consequences for the respective person's work and social life as well as for his or her family, a prime concern being the daughter's options for marriage.

The effects of the role religion and religious institutions play are mostly negative, in particular for women. The traditions and practices create a misogynist environment, put everyone under social control and justify violence. The Pakistani community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii adheres to a separate spheres theory: men are supposed to work and support the family while women stay at home and raise the children (cf. e.g. 235). Many rules and conventions are misogynist, including what the characters call "Islamic law". Men and women are not equal and do not have the same rights, as is shown in the example of a woman not being able to sue an aggressor for rape because she cannot provide a male – and thus reliable – witness (cf. 157). This episode takes place in Pakistan, but the rules in Dasht-e-Tanhaii are based on the same ideas.[337] What is deemed appropriate for men differs from the conventions for women. One example is the question of sex before marriage: while women have to be virgins – otherwise they destroy their family honour and do not get a good husband in the first place – men are allowed to have sex before they get married. Men can even marry several times under Islamic law. Many of the misogynist representations can be seen as references to religious practices in real life. In addition, the misogynism is even expressed through language, which becomes apparent in such utterances as men *possess* women (cf. 150) and daughters and sisters are seen as a *burden* (cf. 346).

The rules of social organisation and practices by the religious community in Dasht-e-Tanhaii are also the source of a lot of violence, not only but also against women. The most prominent example in the novel is the honour killing at the centre of the narration. Other instances include the sexual abuse of children at the mosque

[336] The priest in the Christian church excludes a couple who live together without being married and asks the congregation to cut them out. So it is not just the Muslim mosque which is criticised for their power abuse; the slight difference is, however, that the priest's behaviour has generated a controversy (cf. 247).

[337] Characters such as Kaukab show a confusion of law and religion. "My religion is not the British legal system, it is Islam," says Kaukab (155) – and Chanda's brothers use a similar argument to defend their honour killing (cf. 347-348).

(cf. 234, 245) – with the institution trying to hide it (cf. 235f.) – and the practiced circumcision that Charag calls the "first act of violence done to me in the name of a religious or social system" (320). Another violent example is the exorcism conducted on a Muslim girl (cf. 185f.). Her parents claimed she was possessed by a djinn – when readers know that she did not want to marry and sleep with the man her parents chose for her because she was in love with a Hindu boy. The exorcism results in her torture and death, and Shamas criticises the "criminally stupid parents" and the "monstrous holy man" (196).

Suraya's predicament is a prime example of how conventions and social control or observation can destroy lives – but also that some of the characters are complicit in sustaining and reproducing the system. Suraya was born and raised in England, but also spent some time in Pakistan with her husband. She believes she has both contexts' conventions figured out and can play with them. In Pakistan, she pretends not to understand the codes and disregards them, "[t]he confidence of her English life still clinging to her" (157). This works for a while – "her wide-eyed innocence was found endearing and laughed off" (157) – but then it gets her into trouble. She interferes in another family's feud and in return some men threaten to tell everybody that they have raped her. "As it turned out it was as bad as if they had raped her. What mattered was not what you yourself knew to have actually happened, but what other people thought had happened." (158)

Suraya's biggest problem is that her husband divorced her when he was drunk by saying "talaaq" three times. This as such would not be so bad, but now Suraya cannot be together with her son. According to the law, she has to marry somebody else, get him to divorce her and then remarry her first husband in order to return to her son. The whole situation is absurd: her husband does not even remember what he said, but Suraya claims that "Allah has witnessed" (159). The narrative instance suggests that the divorce problem happens more often as clerics receive letters from desperate husbands in England, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India who want to undo their performative speech act (cf. 159). "[B]ut Allah's law was Allah's law and nothing could be done." (159) In the end, the women suffer from this questionable rule – Suraya often complains about the humiliation she suffers while trying to correct her husband's mistake. And the hypocrisy is striking: it is also Allah's law not to drink alcohol and if the believers think Allah witnesses everything, he would also have witnessed the rape, but for this a male witness is needed. While Suraya

attempts to follow the path prescribed by Pakistani law or conventions to reunite her family, Shamas is not willing to be complicit and argues that the system should be questioned and changed (cf. 236, 240).

(Ex)change Attempts

The situation in Dasht-e-Tanhaii is described as incredibly unjust and unfavourable. While dogmatism, segregation and religious extremism are portrayed as the reason for this, change is valued as positive by the novel as a whole. However, it is also represented as very difficult. There are attempts to engage with different cultures (in particular Shamas, Jugnu and Shamas' children) and initiate change, but there are a lot of obstacles. And there are no "maps" for orientation, no available role models (since Jugnu is dead). The most extreme case of negative consequences for cultural (ex)change is the conversion of a 15-year-old Muslim boy to Christianity: he is publicly beheaded in Saudi Arabia (281).

The default situation in the Dasht-e-Tanhaii Pakistani community is that practices and rules of social organisation are passed on in the families. Thus, for example, the girls learn "traditional values like modesty and submission" (203) and the wish to please men, while boys are "prepared" for their role as breadwinners and sent to university to train as doctors (the children are not asked). The parents are thus complicit in perpetuating the system.[338] One of the tragedies is that the parents are not able to select what they want to pass on. It's all or nothing, even if the mothers once were unhappy daughters, too.

The mothers, in particular, play a tragic role. Doubly discriminated against – as women in their own community and as "Pakis" by the whites – they do have an incentive of changing conventions. Kaukab is said to have wanted more freedom herself – such as getting an education and learning how to ride a bike (cf. 113) – but she not only never got it but was also unable to allow her daughter more freedom. Kaukab also has moments of doubt[339], but they are never strong enough to initiate change. Chanda's mother has moments in which she thinks that what girls are able to

[338] Kaukab feels confirmed in her ways. Thus she e.g. refers to the story of the Muslim girl and her Hindu lover to prove that marrying 'correctly', i.e. agreeing to a marriage arranged by the girl's parents leads to happiness (cf. 97). Through dramatic irony, however, the readers know better. Kaukab refers to the same girl who is tortured to death by a cleric imported from Pakistan because the parents believe she refuses to sleep with her husband (and cousin) because she is possessed by an evil djinn (cf. 85-88 and 185).

[339] "She sits there, wondering whether that's who she is [...] a mother who feeds poison to her son, a mother who jumps to conclusions and holds her daughter responsible for the fact that her marriage ended disastrously?" (308)

do nowadays was not all that bad, but this does not prevent her sons from murdering their sister. So Chanda's mother realizes with horror that she gave birth to her daughter as well as to her murderers. Nothing changes, traditions are kept. The mothers are complicit in reproducing the misogynist and restrictive system[340]. Jutta Weingarten also comments on this. She argues that the characterisation of a large part of *MFLL*'s female Muslim characters "challenges the idea of a Muslim society dominated by men."[341] The female Muslim characters are not passive victims of the patriarchal and dogmatic system, but in fact they reproduce it.[342] While I agree with Weingarten's observation of the result, my interpretation of the majority of the female characters in *MFLL* differs from Weingarten's in that I claim that they are represented as victims and accomplices at the same time. Kaukab is not depicted in making an active choice; her behaviour rather appears to be the result of her indoctrination and her being overburdened. Female characters who were born and raised in the UK are depicted to have more agency and make different choices. However, the effect of the characterisation of the majority of women in *MFLL* is, in fact, that the system is perpetuated. In Chanda's case this leads to Chanda's death. In Kaukab's case it leads to the children avoiding their home. Mah-Jabin accuses her mother of having dragged her "laws and codes, the so-called traditions [...] into this country [...] like shit on [her] shoes" (114). Mah-Jabin is angry at her mother and asks: "why didn't you make sure I avoided such a life? Answer me... Answer me... Why do you people keep doing the same things over and over again expecting a different result?" (113)[343] Kaukab cannot handle the argument with her daughter. Kaukab cannot deal with the fact that Mah-Jabin challenges her, Kaukab's, ways and reacts with violence: first she hits Mah-Jabin, calls her a "little bitch" (114) and then even attacks her with a knife. Many parents in the novel react bewildered when faced by their children's demands for more choice and freedom, and apparently many

[340] Many other mothers complain about their children, in particular that they show no respect – meaning that they do not obey their parents – and that they assimilated to the British way of life – possibly also referring to their challenge of traditions and parents' regime. Suraya says she is grateful not to have a daughter – possibly because she believes that she could not have spared her daughter from the community's rules or conventions (cf. 153). Another extreme case is the story about the girl who is later tortured to death: when the girl refuses to sleep with her husband, it is *her* mother who tells the husband to "rape her tonight." (88)

[341] Weingarten 2011: 16.

[342] Cf. ibid.

[343] Kaukab: "Not everyone has the freedom to walk away from a way of life […] The fact that you have managed to do it easily has made you arrogant and heartless." (115) Mah-Jabin: "It was not easy! It is still a torment. What hurts me is that you could have given me that freedom instead of delivering me into the same kind of life that you were delivered into." (115)

children leave their families to live somewhere else, safe from the social control of Dasht-e-Tanhaii, and according to different conventions.

Some characters reject cultural exchange (and change) because of their upbringing and indoctrination, such as Kaukab and Chanda's relatives. Other characters embrace cultural exchange because of their upbringing as a welcome option to change unjust conventions, such as Shamas, Jugnu, Charag and Mah-Jabin. One can observe that the likable characters promote cultural exchange and 'mixing and matching' – Shamas even makes an explicit statement about the imperative to mix elements from different sources to satisfy one's imagination.[344]

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, the characters' comportment, their comments and the sympathy steering in the novel paint a negative picture of religions – first and foremost of their institutions. This applies to the Muslim ones as well as Hindu (cf. 144) and Christian institutions (cf. 247),[345] through a number of comparisons and references, such as the comparison between Christmas and Eid, the reference to many prophets who appear in the Bible as well as in the Koran (cf. 291), but also the sexual abuse of children, the expulsion of "non-obedient" believers (cf. 247).

Traditions serve as justification for misogynism, violence, segregation that almost amounts to a parallel society and the rejection of (ex)change. Since religion is said to serve as a basis for the vast majority of the cultural practices, the effect of such representation is a demonization of religion. There is not a single character in the novel who is religious without being a fundamentalist. No religious character manages to question any of the rules and practices, which adds to the criticism of religion as such. There is no disclaimer that this refers to a certain interpretation of religion only. In addition, the religious characters are – despite the many perspectives and personal stories – represented as a rather homogenous group. Characters who distance themselves from religion and passed-on practices that discriminate against

[344] Cf. 82 and see the explanation below under 4.2.3.4.

[345] The chapter that begins with the child abuse in the mosque is entitled "Leopold Bloom and the Koh-i-Noor". This reference to James Joyce invites a comparison between the mosque in *MFLL* and the church in Joyce's works – with the result that the two are equally corrupt and degenerated which is highlighted by the child abuse.

people are on the whole the likable ones, such as Jugnu[346] and Chanda, Shamas and Charag.

The current (and past) situation in Dasht-e-Tanhaii is described as incredibly unjust and detrimental. The novel points towards segregation and religious extremism as root causes of this situation. A constructive debate about religion and tradition remains a desideratum, cultural exchange and change are valued as desirable.

4.2.3.4. Language, Metaphors, Symbols and Intertextual References

In order to appropriately deal with *MFLL*, one needs to have a close look at the way language is employed throughout the novel. *MFLL* is full of poetic language, metaphors, symbols, interlaced stories and references to other artists and other forms of art (such as music and painting). However, different characters are associated or related to different forms and functions of language and there is an implied understanding that the default language is Urdu, even though the text is written in English. In the following section, I will have a look at the use of aesthetic devices such as intertextual references, symbols and metaphors and the effects of their employment. But first I will explain the implied arrangement of *MFLL*'s language.

Language

Maps for Lost Lovers is written in English. However, similar to *Brick Lane*, it is understood that the language actually represented is a Pakistani language (most likely Urdu or Punjabi). It is explained, for example, that Kaukab does not speak English very well, so the reader has to assume that when Kaukab and Shamas talk to each other, it is in their mother tongue. In addition, there are some explicit markers for language shifts throughout the text, e.g. in the chapter "In Darkness". In this chapter, Kaukab complains about her husband and brother in law speaking English with Jugnu's girlfriend so that Kaukab feels excluded. In other instances, such as the assault on the bus driver, it is explicitly mentioned that they are speaking in Punjabi.[347] However, these markers are not applied consistently, e.g. readers may assume that Charag must speak English with Stella, but there is no marker for that.

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[346] "Jugnu taught me that we should try and break away from all the bonds and ties that manipulative groups have thought up for their own advantage." (says Charag, 321)

[347] Some words such as kameez, food names and other Pakistani vocabulary are italicised and stand out as 'exotic' or abnormal.

Why is this important? Even though the readers are able to look into Kaukab's thoughts and understand her, she remains an outsider to the English world, as her English is very bad. Some misunderstandings are humorous, such as Kaukab's mixed-up proverbs (cf. 32f.) and her confusion about the fact that "even *things* in England spoke a different language than the one they did back in Pakistan." (35)[348] However, the sad side prevails. Kaukab feels humiliated because of her accent, like "a beggar who does not want to stretch out her hand because that hand was dirty." (313) So Kaukab is estranged from her non-Subcontinental surrounding, as language can work as a mechanism of in- or exclusion. It is, however, her choice not to improve her English. It is a sign of her personal rejection of a personal relationship with the British inhabitants of the town (and also a rejection of cultural exchange) and not the result of a husband who forbids his wife to leave the house.

In the following section, the use and effect of metaphors, symbols and intertextual references (in a broad sense)[349] will be scrutinized. The four main forms and functions of these devices will be extracted and contextualized: they bring together references from 'Western' as well as 'Eastern' cultural contexts (and communicate that the author is educated in British, Indian, Pakistani, Christian, Muslim and Sikh contexts as well as in Greek mythology), they evoke 'exotic'[350] images or an exoticised environment, they characterise and serve as foreshadowings, and they serve to celebrate various forms of art as well as a combination of elements from various cultural sources.

Metaphors

Metaphors are not only rhetoric devices that can be used for embellishment. Metaphors "serve as subtle epistemological, conceptual, and cultural tools that are imbued with a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and ideological connotations."[351]

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[348] In Kaukab's house – and as a sign of her transformation of the place into something 'exotic' or Subcontinental – things fall with a "*daraam!*", the Pakistani equivalent of a thud (40).

[349] I understand the following aspects to be included in this: references to other novels, such as *Ulysses*; references to other forms of art such as music, painting, poetry, photography; references to mythology; references to other sections within the novel, not only but also through chapter names.

[350] Cf. Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. London: Routledge, 2001.

[351] Grabes, Herbert, Ansgar Nünning and Sibylle Baumbach. "Metaphors as a Way of World-Making, or: Where Metaphors and Culture meet." *Metaphors Shaping Culture and Theory*. REAL 25. Grabes, Herbert, Ansgar Nünning and Sibylle Baumbach (eds). Tübingen: Narr, 2009. xii.
For a discussion of the use of metaphor theory, in particular the potential and pitfalls of cognitive metaphor theory, see Olson, Greta. "Metaphors and Cultural Transference: Mediating Cognitivist and Culturalist Approaches." *Metaphors Shaping Culture and Theory*. REAL 25. Grabes, Herbert, Ansgar Nünning and Sibylle Baumbach (eds). Tübingen: Narr, 2009. 17-31.

In *MFLL*, these ideological as well as cultural connotations are worth having a closer look at, in particular in the context of cultural exchange. Metaphors

> perform a crucial role in terms of the cultural and the buried plot of visual and textual representations of cultural exchange. Metaphors function as 'mininarrations' (Eubanks) or 'paradigm scenarios' (de Sousa) which implicitly tell their readers or audiences in which narrative-cultural context they should be placed and how the target domain of the metaphor is supposed to be viewed.[352]

Metaphors can 'visualize' cultural exchange processes and be results of such processes, e.g. if the metaphor combines elements from different cultures or ideologies. Thus they can mirror movement and transformation from one cultural context to another.[353] Metaphors also "have a vital role to play as constitutive elements of auto- and heterostereotypes."[354]

All these aspects can be found in *MFLL* as the following analysis will show. It will be interesting to see whether there are metaphors that combine British and South Asian elements or whether the metaphors stay as segregated as the Pakistani community in the novel. I will show that metaphors linked to individual characters are constructed and how these work for the novel as a whole. One might assume that Shamas will engage a lot in cultural exchange whereas Kaukab will remain within her habitual context. Another assumption to test is whether on a macro-level, cultural exchange – e.g. in metaphors – is possible, whereas on the plot level, cultural exchange is almost made impossible for the individual characters.

The first kind of recurring metaphors in *MFLL* are those that depreciate others by choosing sources that indicate lower status or medical conditions. These metaphors reinforce negative heterostereotypes and are most often used by Kaukab and other members of the rather fundamentalist or extremist religious camp. The most prominent example is the linking of Hindu culture and religion with sickness and infection. When the Muslims in Shamas' father's town learn that he was born a Hindu, they pretend they need to wash after touching him and the women say that the

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See also Stedman, Gesa. *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 235-242.
[352] Stedman 2013: 237.
[353] Ibid.: 236f.
[354] Ibid.: 237.

products Mahtaab sells are contaminated (cf. 81f.).[355] Chakor is said to be "infected with Hinduism" (81).

Another recurring type of metaphor is used to criticise social control and highlight the harmful effects of such social control. The source domains are often pain, imprisonment[356] and once even war.[357] Two examples: "The neighbourhood is a place of Byzantine intrigue and emotional espionage, where when people stop on the street their tongues are like two halves of a scissor coming together, cutting reputations and good names to shreds." (176) Talk / verbal utterances can cause real damage and destruction, in particular when a person is defined by his or her reputation and "name". In Ujala's words: "the magnifying glass through which he was kept in sight was burning him" (128), highlighting the pain caused by this specific kind of parental and community control. And Shamas remarks: "There are times in this life when a person must do or say things he doesn't want to. Human beings and chains, it is the oldest acquaintanceship in the world." (176) "The oldest acquaintanceship in the world" is also the name of a chapter and refers to conventions and practices that are passed on (or invented in the name of religion and tradition) even though they contradict common sense and human rights.

Less frequent but still recurrent are metaphors used to express loneliness, such as the name of the town, chosen by the immigrants: "Desert of Loneliness", "Wilderness of solitude" (29) – a metaphor shared by all immigrants who otherwise hate each other and highlight differences. And finally, there are some metaphors using animals as a source domain for human beings albeit not in a negative way. This is linked to symbols and name translations as will be discussed below. A recurring scheme is the linking of religion and medicine. While a character's own religion is seen as something positive, as medicine,[358] the religion of others is combined with illness and infection.

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[355] Interestingly, this washing ritual reflects a practice in Hindu or Indian culture: people wash if they have come into contact with someone from the untouchable caste, for example. This practice may have been carried over to the Muslim characters in this case.

[356] Such as: "steel trap around his heart" (19), "imprisoned in the cage of each others' thoughts" (117), "Shame, guilt, honour and fear are like padlocks hanging from mouths. No one makes a sound in case it draws attention. No one speaks. No one breathes. The place is bumpy with buried secrets and problems swept under carpets." (45)

[357] "The terror has been hurtling around inside him [Shamas] like a grenade with the pin pulled out." (162)

[358] The rosary is Kaukab's medicine, the Koran brings her solace (cf. 70): "She now enters the kitchen, rosary in hand, the beads the size of pills – her own medicine." Chanda's brothers perceive the "honour killing" of their sister as "cure" (278) in the name of religion.

Different characters reveal different mind sets and values with regard to religion. Metaphors containing religion as either target or source are predestined to be read as mini-narratives of the characters' value systems. Here, the characters in *MFLL* are divided into two camps: one the one hand, there are those characters who are described as Muslims, most of them adhering to the rules passed on without ever questioning them. Kaukab is the most prominent character of this camp. On the other hand, there are characters such as Shamas, who are described as secular – and who are often artists – and who criticise the way religion is lived in Dasht-e-Tanhaii[359], above all crimes committed in the name of religion such as exorcism/torture, arranged marriages against the will of the "participants" and honour killings. Ujala's comparison of Kaukab's faith and prayers – "like chewing gum for the brain" (322) – is clearly a reference to Karl Marx's dictum that religion "is the opium of the people"[360] and thus a reference to a completely different cultural context. Even though some of the characters of the latter group have their weaknesses as well, the novel overall takes the side of the secular characters and condemns unchallenged religious practices and violence and injustice in the name of religion, the most prominent event being Chanda's and Jugnu's murder.

Blending is not used very often. Surprisingly, it is Kaukab who tries to see something Pakistani in an English river and thus blend it into something that might cure her homesickness.[361] Shamas is the most likely character for blends because he deals with a variety of cultures at work and when he reads, but it does not occur as often as might be expected. The following text passage is taken out of a context in which Shamas sits at his father's bedside. His father is sick and about to die. This example illustrates not only an instance of blending, it also communicates the novel's take on cultural exchange (here in the disguise of imagination) through Shamas:

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[359] Such as referring to Kaukab's education as being "born and raised in the *shadow* of a minaret" (62, emphasis added, S.v.L.). The metaphor of darkness reoccurs in the chapter "In Darkness": the darkness refers only superficially to the power cut, but actually to Kaukab's ignorance and "mental derangement" due to her religious indoctrination. Furthermore, the implications of the following wording are interesting: "[…] the father of Jugnu's girlfriend Chanda had taken up the reins at the mosque." (15) This sounds as if the Muslim community were animals that need to be led. In addition, it implies a hierarchy and unequal power relations with one leader making decisions (and interpretations) that have an impact on the whole community.

[360] Marx, Karl. "Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* 7 (1844).

[361] Kaukab says about a nearby stream: "It flows from right to left like Urdu." (95) The English stream is combined with a source from the Subcontinent. However, as the attentive reader will notice, the direction of the river – from left to right or vice versa – depends on the bank one stands on, so Kaukab's comparison is rather a desperate attempt.

> The *harsinghar* tree in the courtyard, which dropped its funeral white flowers at dawn, had more flowers than usual under it during those mornings, as though the branches had been disturbed during the night. Shamas was no believer, but imagination insists that all aspects of life be at its disposal, the language of thought richer for its appropriation of concepts such as the afterlife. And so as he looked at the carpet of blossoms he couldn't help entertaining the thought that during the night Izraeel, the Muslim angel of death, had wrestled in the branches above with the Hindu god of death for our father's soul. Shamas looked up and imagined the branches twisting around the two supernatural beings, the flowers detaching from twigs and forming a thick layer on the ground. (82)

In the passage above, Shamas mixes elements from various sources through his imagination. This passage brings together religious stories with a folk tale and the imagination of an agnostic artist[362]. The *harsinghar* tree is a popular tree in South Asia, colloquially also called the tree of sorrow.[363] This mirrors the sorrow that Chakor's religious identity and later his tragic death cause. The dominant colour is white, a colour associated with death and mourning in Muslim and Hindu contexts – a meaning that both religions share, which is particularly interesting as Chakor is in a situation in which Islam and Hinduism form two irreconcilable oppositions. Shamas imagines a Muslim angel and a Hindu god fighting for his father's soul, visualizing Chakor's conflict. The narrator tells us that Shamas, who is not religious, cannot help but combine all sources at his disposal to process the impending death of his father. The wording here suggests that this act of blending is a 'natural thing' that the human brain does when it faces a situation in which it needs to make sense of life – or, as in this case, death. Conversely, it is also a judgement against those not engaging in cultural exchange.

[362] "He [Shamas] is not a believer, so he knows that the universe is without saviours: the surface of the earth is a great shroud whose dead will not be resurrected." (20)

[363] "The [*Harsingar*] is also known as Tree of Sorrow due to a folk tale being associated with it. It is believed that a princess fell in love with the Sun who soon deserted her. Unable to bear the pangs of separation, the princess killed herself and was cremated. The Tree of Sorrow arose from her ashes and that is why the shrub blooms after sunset and the flowers drop each morning unable to bear the sight of the sun." Narain, Kiran. "Scent of Sorrow." *The Tribune* 10 September 2006. http://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060910/spectrum/garden.htm (accessed 16 September 2013).

Symbols[364]

The most prominent symbols in the novel are animals (and the moon[365]), such as moths, peacocks and parakeets. The parakeets flying over Dasht-e-Tanhaii remind many characters of their former homes.

> [T]he Indian parakeet is a recurring motif in Indian mythology and folk tales. The parrot in Hindu mythology is associated with Kama, the god of love. The reason was [*sic!*] this could be its green feathers and red beak which associates it with fertility. Red beak represents the red earth before the rain and the green feathers represent the green earth after the rains. Red represents unfulfilled desire, full of yearning while green represents fulfilled desire, full of joy.[366]

In the novel, the parakeets are seen first and foremost as native to the Indian Subcontinent and are thus for many characters a source of homesickness.

The four parts of the novel are decorated with a picture of the deer and the cypress. This combination might trigger the following associations: tree of life, death and immortality, possibly foreshadowing the future of Suraya (she remembers a poem about a deer and then her son) and Shamas (who is closely connected to everything literary in the novel). The sign of the Safeena is said to be of "a red as deep as dolphin blood" (151). General associations with dolphins run along the lines of their similarities to human beings: they are mammals, they are said to be intelligent, friendly and communicative. It can be foreshadowing Shamas' dead or that art does not win the "war" against religion in Dasht-e-Tanhaii, but this comparison remains awkward (estrangement, over the top poetic language). Furthermore, the Koh-i-Noor, a diamond ("Mountain of Light") that was taken from Punjab and inserted in the English Crown Jewels, is mentioned in *MFLL*. It can be read as a symbol for India, but also a symbol for the British Empire and in particular for the British stealing from their colonies. This latter version also appears in other novels such as *White Teeth*.

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[364] Symbols are means of representations that have an arbitrary relation with the objects they represent. The relationship depends on the conventions of the cultural context it is used in. In *MFLL*, various cultural and religious contexts play a role, e.g. Muslim, Hindu and Christian traditions. In most cases interpretations are provided in one context only so that the reader needs to research other meanings him- or herself when s/he wants to compare the meanings in different contexts. As many symbols are rooted in a Subcontinental context, the 'average' British reader might be able to draw comparisons with 'Western' cultures without greater effort. In some cases, different interpretations are spread across the novel and only need to be connected by the reader.

[365] The moon plays an important role in Islam. The Islamic calendar is based on the moon and the most important religious celebration of the year, Eid ul-Fitr (the feast at the end of the Ramadan), is linked to the sighting of a crescent new moon.

[366] Pattanaik, Devdutt. "Decoding Hindy Mythology: Secrets of the Parrot." *Star of Mysore*. 2010. http://www.ourkarnataka.com/Articles/starofmysore/sparrot.htm (accessed 29 July 2012).

The characters in the novel use them in different cultural contexts – Islam, Hinduism, Christian/'Western' background – in the vast majority of the cases the meanings of the symbols are explained explicitly, if not immediately then spread throughout the novel. While this can feel patronising at times, the reason for the explanations might be the fear that the majority of the readers might not be familiar with South Asian and religious symbols and thus miss out on some of the allusions. Through the explanations, the novel functions as mediator for the readers.

The most important and most frequently used symbol is the moth. It appears as an actual moth in the novel, but also as a symbol for a variety of things. Moths can e.g. stand for a soul and, connected to this, also for death. Jugnu, for example, refers explicitly to a law in Ireland that pays attention to this superstition (cf. 71). Through Jugnu's close connection to moths, not least through his job as a lepidopterist, moths in the novel can also stand for Jugnu. They can serve as foreshadowing that he is indeed dead. Furthermore, moths metamorphose – in some cultures this even makes them a symbol for resurrection – which could – again in relation to Jugnu – also stand for transformation, change and cultural exchange. Later in the novel, another hint at the personification of the moths or the animalisation of Jugnu is voiced after the trial by Shamas: "'Why weren't they careful? Even animals know to retreat from obvious danger. For all his love of the natural world, Jugnu should have remembered that all animals retreat from fire.' 'All, except moths.'" (281)

The second most important animal and symbol in *MFLL* is the peacock. As the national bird of India it symbolises the Subcontinent. In addition, in some cultures, the peacock is a symbol for pride and vanity. There is one reference in which religious people in the community are worried about the arrival of peacocks as there is a story about the peacock linked to Satan.[367] In Christian mythology, the peacock can be a symbol for immortality or eternal life – some characters wanted to see in them Chanda and Jugnu surviving. The peacock as well as the moth and the Great Peacock Moth are linked to Jugnu. In the end, the Great Peacock butterflies are said to like the hawthorns next to the cemetery, possibly pointing towards the truth about Jugnu.

The novel plays with the 'fact' that the peacocks are just birds, but many characters wanted to see something in them that was not there. The story of the

[367] "Their [the peacocks] presence in the neighbourhood was disturbing to some. The faithful have always been ambivalent towards peacocks because it was this kind-hearted creature that had inadvertently let Satan into the Garden of Eden." (334)

animals' origin – that they "had escaped from the menagerie of a stately home in the neighbourhood" (59) – is given explicitly in the novel. The owner is probably rather a white person (the South Asian immigrants in the novel all seem to be poor or at least far away from owning a "stately home") and possibly held them because they look so 'exotic' or remind them of the Subcontinent.

What is the function of the symbols in *MFLL*? Like the metaphors, they illustrate the author's skills and education and claim a status higher than mere entertainment literature for the novel. In addition, James Procter observed that "England is effectively orientalised"[368] in Aslam's novel. Peacocks, parakeets, Hindu and Muslim artists, mythological stories, supersticion etc. exoticise the environment. Metaphors, symbols and intertextual references are supported by descriptions including all senses, such as smell (air with incense (cf. 3), smell and taste of Cardamom in the coffee (17) or Kaukab's cooking (305)), sound (Nusrat's music) and touch (Indian fabrics). These references might even aim at making it hard for the reader to orientate him- or herself, just as there are no maps for the lost lovers.

Shamas himself and the narrator when s/he speaks about Shamas move around in various cultural contexts and in some instances even combine 'Eastern' and 'Western' sources such as literature and music. If Kaukab's perspective is represented, religion (Islam) is the main source of the metaphors and symbols. In her imagination, the autostereotype "Islam is great" and the negative heterostereotype "other religions and heathens are bad and infectious" dominate.

Intertextual References

The main intertextual references[369] are to other art forms and artists and the chapter headings. The sources of the intertextual references are art and literature, flora and fauna of the Subcontinent as well as religion (mostly Islam). The functions these references fulfil can be summarized as follows: foreshadowing events in the novel[370], exoticising the narration and claiming a status for the text (and author) among renowned artists in 'Western' and 'Eastern' canons, rather than popular contemporary fiction. In addition, many chapter headings and art references are

[368] Procter 2008.
[369] I employ a wide definition that also includes chapter names, mottoes etc. (cf. e.g. Plett, Heinrich (ed.). *Intertextuality*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991. In particular the article by Wolfgang Karrer on "Titles and Mottoes as Intertextual Devices." (122-134)).
[370] Such as the chapter "A Thousand Broken Mirrors" that hints at the many unfortunate turns and twists that lead to Chanda's and Jugnu's murder.

related to love, loneliness and conflicts resulting from limiting conventions, such as the chapter called "The Oldest Acquaintanceship in the World" that refers to the chains of convention (cf. 176).

Literature and art play an important role throughout the novel. The sources of the references are taken from 'Western' canonized works, such as James Joyce, John Berger, Greek mythology and the Bible as well as from the Subcontinent, such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan[371], Anwar Saeed[372], Bhupen Khakar[373] and Koran stories. Through these references the novel claims a status in their ranks.[374] The references to the Subcontinent in the novel in combination with chapter names such as "The Most Famous Tamarind Tree in the Indian Subcontinent", "Dard di Raunaq"[375] and other Pakistani and Indian elements contribute to the evocation of a rather 'exotic' setting.

A further function of many art references is the discussion of the role of art. In this context, Shamas and his father Chakor represent writers, Charag painters and Nusrat musicians. Shamas sees the role of literature in creating beautiful works of art that, at the same time, engage in politics. For Shamas, his work as an artist had direct consequences for his life: he had to leave Pakistan because of his political writings and communist ideals. With his bookshop, the Safeena, Shamas created a safe space

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[371] Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is a world-famous devotional singer from Pakistan. He is well known on the Subcontinent for his performances of *qawwali*, a Sufi Muslim devotional music, but has also cooperated with 'Western' musicians and worked for the music label EMI and Hollywood. He contributed to the score of movies such as "Dead Man Walking" (1995) and "Natural Born Killers" (1994) as well as after his death in the more recent movies "Eat. Pray. Love." (2010), "Blood Diamond" (2006), "Monsoon Wedding" (2001), "Bend it Like Beckham" (2002). (cf. "Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1948-1997)." *IMDb.com*. http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002163/?ref_=fn_al_nm_1 (accessed 29 July 2012). See also: Leonard, Karen. "State, Culture, and Religion: Political Action and Representation among South Asians in North America." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 9.1 (2000). 21-38.)

[372] One of his etchings gave one chapter the title "You'll Forget Love, Like Other Disasters".

[373] Bhupen Khakar is a contemporary Indian artist. One of his paintings is called "How Many Hands Do I Need to Declare My Love to You?" and it lent its title to one of *MFLL*'s chapters.

[374] One of the books in Shamas' bookshop Safeena even has the same deer and cypress image as the novel *MFLL*. In a way, this positions *MFLL* along with Shamas' politically engaged, poetic and hopeful literature. In addition, Nadeem Aslam chose a motto by Octavio Paz for the novel – "A human being is never what he is but the self he seeks." – and dedicated it to his father (who was also a writer under the pen name Wamaq Saleem and appears twice in the novel) and the artists Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Abdur Rahman Chughtai. Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) was a renowned poet – as well as a Marxist and editor of a leftist newspaper. He wrote "modern Urdu verse that took on larger social and political issues […] He has been described as a 'committed' poet who used his simple verse to probe not only beauty and love but also humanism and justice." ("Faiz Ahmad Faiz, 1911-1984." *The South Asian Literary Recordings Project*. Library of Congress, New Delhi Office. 6 October 2010. http://www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/faiz.html (accessed 11 September 2013).) Abdul Rahman Chughtai (1897–1975) "is often regarded as the first significant modern Muslim artist from South Asia, with his work reflecting Mughal aesthetics along with literary references to […] Persian and Urdu poets." (Ku, Hawon. "Iftikhar Dadi, Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010)." *Journal of Central Eurasian Studies* 3 (2012). 133.)

[375] A reference to a Punjabi poem (cf. 271f.).

and an institution to promote art. Shamas stocks books that are forbidden in Pakistan as well as rare books and niche books, such as Urdu and Persian poetry that would be hard to find anywhere else in Dasht-e-Tanhaii. And the Safeena is also a refuge from conventions, among other things also a place for Shamas' and Suraya's affair. Ujala accuses Shamas of escaping from reality, daydreaming about a better future and not caring enough for the present and his family (cf. 324). Shamas' father was also involved in political writing: he contributed to the magazine *The First Children on the Moon*. In a subsection called 'Encyclopedia Pakistanica'[376] people were asked to send in contributions about their own stories that are connected to Pakistan's independence. In this sense, it might be an allusion to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children*. The magazine was published in Urdu and Hindi – and thus represents a connection between communities that were separated in the times after Partition. However, the magazine loses the sympathy of the readers when Chakor is excluded once his Hindu origin is revealed (cf. 81).

Charag, on the other hand, is a painter. His most discussed work is called "Uncut self-Portrait". It is a painting of himself, naked, in a paradisiacal setting – and with a foreskin. While Kaukab is shocked and believes there will be an outcry in the religious community – she sees the painting as blasphemous and immoral (cf. 329) – Charag's portrait is itself an outcry against violence in the name of religion.

Despite these polarizing effects of art, if one looks at the community of Dasht-e-Tanhaii, art also has the potential to bring people together who would otherwise not even speak to each other. The most prominent example in the novel is Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (cf. 162, 184ff., 238), whose performance brings together religious people, agnostics, young and old.

A final important point in the novel's explicit discussions about the role of art is connected to gender. Shamas observes that "the poet-saints of Islam express[ed] their loathing of power and injustice always through female protagonists in their romances." (191) Shamas elaborates:

> And always always it was the vulnerability of women that was used by the poet-saints to portray the intolerance and oppression of their times: in their

[376] The *Encyclopedia Pakistanica* is a reference to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. On the one hand, it is a creative cultural transfer of a British model, an adaptation in a different form. In addition, it is a commitment to the ideals of the Enlightenment – and thus a contrast to a social and political context in which many rules and decisions are based on religion and not rational thought. On the other hand, it is an important step in nation-building and an attempt to claim agency by compiling Pakistani accounts of the country's independence. What Shamas' father envisaged was the history of his country from multiple perspectives from within (and not, e.g. by the British).

> verses the women rebel and try bravely to face all oppositions. They – more than the men – attempt to make a new world. And, in every poem and every story, they fail. But striving they become part of the universal story of human hope – Sassi succumbed to the pitiless desert but died with her face pressed to the last sign of her lover. (191f.)

I cannot share Shamas' optimism and hope. The effect of the immense number of stories representing women failing in their fight against conventions is also to cement the status quo. An optimist and romantic might see the hope in those stories, but it is very likely that others "learn the lesson" that rebelling against conventions ends in disaster, in particular if you are female. For the majority of the novel, Shamas is the most likable character and readers are clearly invited to share his assessment of situations. However, this exaltation and his later disorientation make him an ambivalent character whose judgements are questionable.

To sum up, the functions of the intertextual references are to evoke exoticism or different cultural contexts (through art, religion, Subcontinental nature), mirror the characters' loneliness and struggle with conventions (such as in the chapters "The Sunbird and the Vine", "Dard di Raunaq", "At Scandal Point", etc.), show the author's education or place the novel in a specific context of "high-brow" art, and finally create a space for discussions about the role of art.

Concluding Remarks

The functions or effects of the above – metaphors, symbols, intertextual references – are to communicate that the author is educated and able to combine various cultural contexts, to evoke 'exotic' images[377], to characterise the characters and communicate plot hints, to create auto- and heterostereotypes and to praise art and the role it can fulfill, such as education, solace, political commitment and the creation of empathy.

Interestingly, most metaphors, symbols and intertextual references are *explicitly* explained, either in the paratexts or through the characters. This may be a sign for Nadeem Aslam's awareness of his predominantly Anglo-American readers, who might not be able to understand the allusions and associations otherwise. Indeed, the explanations make it easier for the reader who is unfamiliar with Muslim or South Asian symbols and stories to retrace and understand the sources and implications, but it is also slightly patronising for those who do not want or need this

[377] 'Exotic' images are evoked through references to Subcontinental names, stories, practices, comparisons, flora and fauna etc. and they sensually address all five senses.

'help' to be offered explanations in this manner. It also takes responsibility away from the reader and may lead to a more passive reception of the novel.

If we go back to the idea that metaphors are mininarrations that tell readers how to culturally and ideologically contextualize the characters, there are quite a number of instances in which the characters reveal their rejection of cultural exchange, e.g. through negative heterostereotypes that are connected to medical conditions such as contamination. This is the case in particular for characters like Kaukab and other religiously extreme characters.

In *MFLL*, we have mixed contexts, i.e. different characters resort to different sources. On a micro level, with the exception of very few instances, the characters do not combine different cultural sources in their metaphors. On the macro-level, however, *MFLL* shows a vast variety of different target and source domains and achieves a combination of different cultures and ideologies that each character for him- or herself does not achieve. It is, in addition, seen as something positive to be able to combine and engage in cultural exchange – explicitly through Shamas[378] and implicitly through sympathy steering throughout the text.

The metaphors, symbols and intertextual references counter the novel's stories: while there is almost no hope for intercultural exchanges on the story level, there are many results of such creative exchanges and recombinations on the aesthetic level. The text itself accomplishes on an aesthetic level what its characters do not achieve.

4.2.4. Concluding Remarks

In *Maps for Lost Lovers*, the conventions of a Pakistani community and their reinforcement through control and punishment by individuals, such as Kaukab and Chanda's brothers as well as institutions such as the mosque, create many obstacles to cultural transfer – indeed to any exchange. The religious indoctrination and the strong connection between the mostly Islamic religious belief system and the social organisation that goes with it lead to segregation. Furthermore, the hostility of the host culture is portrayed as an inhibitor to cultural exchange processes.

[378] "Shamas was no believer, but imagination insists that all aspects of life be at its disposal, the language of thought richer for its appropriation of concepts such as the afterlife." (82) – for a longer quotation of this section, please see above.

However, in addition to exchange processes on a small scale, in particular initiated by the so-called second generation and other educated characters[379], the effects of a major cultural transfer process are discernible: the Pakistani immigrants transferred their religion, traditions, gender conventions and other rules that dominate the inhabitants' daily lives to a place in England, even renamed it Dasht-e-Tanhaii. The mediators of this one-way transfer were thus quite successful.

The agents or mediators who want to soften the dogmatic nature of this community or simply reject living by the community's conventions face dire problems. Chanda and Jugnu even get killed for breaching the rules by living together without being married. The children of the central characters Shamas and Kaukab move away from their parents and the town to find freedom and education, e.g at universities and bigger cities, spaces that allow for individualism and "mixing and matching".

Aesthetically, the rejection of change and exchange as well as a possible explanation for this attitude find their expression in innumerable metaphors (e.g. of contamination and violence) and contrasting perspectives or reflector characters. It is interesting to see that although the majority of the characters are not able to harmoniously combine elements from different cultural contexts, the novel on the whole combines images, stories, metaphors, etc. from a wide range of cultures.

The cyclical structure of the novel suggests that there is no way out. The signs of hope are not convincing. This effect is mostly achieved through dramatic irony: while one character might hope for a solution or happy end, the readers know through somebody else's perspective that there are some competing and potentially dangerous interests at work. Even love, often heralded as a provider of hope, is no way out. The only 'solution' is death.

The characterisation, the conflicts and the overall representations in the novel unfortunately reinforce stereotypes to some extent, such as the notion of two parallel societies, honour killings, uneducated blind followers of various religions, the notion of Islam as a misogynist religion and world order and violent Muslim men who think they possess the women they marry.

However, the characters are not created in a completely one-dimensional manner. While Shamas' perspective is privileged, there are also instances that

[379] Education and travelling are presented as positive means that allow the student or traveller to experience different cultures, deconstruct stereotypes and acquire more knowledge.

encourage the reader to question his ways.[380] And Kaukab, even though she does a lot of morally suspect things, is also quite ambivalent. She is not just a monster who drives away her children with her indoctrination attempts and guilt games, she also has second thoughts and doubts.[381] But her doubts are not strong enough to initiate change. Kaukab as well as other mothers in the novel pass on their ideology, practices, systems to their children without amending misogynist and discriminatory attitudes.

Nevertheless, even though the novel gives a voice to multiple perspectives, even though it even lets the readers feel compassion or pity for Kaukab and even though it criticises dogmatic world views that seem to see only 'black or white' – in a way, the novel also splits its characters up into two or three groups: on the one hand, there are fundamentalist religious people who are evaluated as harmful to a cohesive society as well as individual happiness. On the other hand, we have the artists and scientists who are evaluated as role models. At times, the privileging of the 'enlightened' characters slips into caricature and becomes annoying – because of its repetitiveness and simplification. Cordula Lemke argues that "the narrator still implies that changing one's identity is a feasible task, if one follows the bright light of reason and does not adhere to a set of oppressive traditions"[382] – and thus "stigmatise[s Kaukab] as a dangerously old-fashioned, racist Pakistani woman"[383]. I agree partly: the narrator implies that the "light of reason" makes identity changes – or rather changes in character – possible, but Kaukab only appears malicious at a first glance. At a second glance, it is implied rather than stated explicitly that Kaukab had to face different conditions than her husband, who grew up in an intellectual household, or than Jugnu, who had the freedom to study abroad because the conventions did not demand that he got married and raised children, or than Mah-Jabin, Ujala and Charag, who went through the British education system. The decision whether Kaukab's refusal to open up and change condemns her or whether she has an excuse remains for the reader to make. The third group consists of the children, the so-called second generation, and finds its representation in many minor

[380] He still remains the character readers identify with. He is the character who gets most space, who is described in most details and who is most likable.
[381] There is even a moment when Kaukab empathizes with young lovers, remembering that her religion, which she uses most of the time to justify restricting conventions, was supposed to be about love in the first place, not segregation and social control: "Love. Islam said that in order not to be unworthy of being, only one thing was required: love." (64)
[382] Lemke 2008: 182.
[383] Ibid.

characters, who appear briefly, and in the Ask children. Ujala e.g. criticises both his parents. The consequence is that most children leave their families and the area, but the reader does not learn much about their alternative ways of life because they are absent most of the time. Since little narrative space is devoted to them, the overall impression of the novel is one of pessimism and binarism.

It would do the novel injustice to say it paints the same 'black and white' pictures it criticises, but there is this tendency. The characters are not a homogeneous group, but the multiple characters and perspectives do not really contribute to a multifaceted picture[384], as there are only a few dominating characterisations and the overall message of the novel is that rational thought needs to win over religion in order to enable cultural (ex)change. This echoes some of the central ideas of the European Enlightenment and at the same time runs the risk of sounding like the justification for the assimilation of people in a colonial context. Furthermore, the novel implies that this cultural (ex)change is not only possible but necessary for the development of the (British) nation. This kind of more simplistic outlook contrasts sharply with *The White Family* and even with the next novel to follow here, Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* which, for all its limitations, contains surprising twists and some aspects also raised in *Maps For Lost Lovers*.

[384] In this regard I do not agree with Weingarten who claims that that the open perspective structure in *MFLL* offers a multifaceted picture of Muslims in Britain (cf. Weingarten 2011: 4 and 16) and prevents a "one-sided reading of the novel" (ibid.: 16). First of all, I do not agree that Suraya is the "moderate Muslim" (cf. ibid.: 13 and 16) that Weingarten claims she is. After losing her son, Suraya becomes as dogmatic and obsessed with the 'rules' as Kaukab and Chanda's family. Thus, Suraya's perspective cannot serve as middle ground between the "extreme poles of the spectrum in the characters of Shamas and Kaukab." (ibid.) In addition, as explained above, the allegedly multiple perspectives of the focalisers are not that different from one another. Furthermore, I claim that in spite of the ambivalences in the sympathy steering, Kaukab's perspective is implicitly criticised while Shamas' perspective is implicitly advocated. Consequently, the represented perspectives are not equal and the picture neither multifaceted nor balanced.

4.3. Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*: Cultural Exchange and Subcultures

4.3.1. Plot and Author

The Plot

The novel revolves around the main protagonist and first-person narrator Jas, a 19-year old boy from Hounslow. He is part of a crew of self-proclaimed "desi rudeboys" around the Sikh boy Harjit, who calls himself Hardjit. Together with Amit and Ravi they roam the streets, pick fights and illegally unblock mobile phones to earn money.

In flashbacks Jas reveals to the reader that he used to be marginalized because of his stammer, shyness and uncool clothing style before he joined Hardjit and his crew. Throughout the novel, Jas tries very hard to be a "proper" or "authentic" rudeboy – with varying success. The novel opens with Hardjit beating a white boy, Daniel, because Hardjit (wrongly) claims that Daniel had called them "Pakis". Jas joins in the abuse, even though Daniel is a former friend of his and never called anybody "Paki".

Mr Ashwood, a former teacher of the boys, is worried about their future and introduces them to Sanjay Varma. Sanjay is a former student, who Mr Ashwood believes has integrated to British society and made a lot of money as a banker in the City. What Mr Ashwood does not know is that Sanjay is not the expected role model but a criminal. Sanjay turns the "wannabes" (167) into real criminals: they steal mobile phones for him and Sanjay pays them very well in return. This allows the boys to afford designer clothes and other things with which they aim to improve their status and impress the girls, such as "bling" gym memberships, parties in expensive clubs and other status symbols.

One of the main conflicts emerges when Jas falls in love with Samira Ahmed, a Muslim girl from the neighbourhood. Hardjit and the crew condemn this liaison because they oppose interethnic and interreligious relationships, so Jas confides in Sanjay, who teaches him how to impress Samira. When Hardjit and the others find out about this relationship they exclude Jas from their group.

However, the relationship with Samira is just one reason for Jas' expulsion. Amit's brother Arun plans to marry his fiancé Reena and experiences trouble with his family: his family demands signs of respect from Reena's family that both Arun and Reena find outrageous. After talking to Jas about this situation and after Jas helps him to feel more confident, Arun confronts his parents. There is no resolution

to the conflict and Arun commits suicide. The families blame Jas for the suicide. This is the second reason Jas has to leave the gang.

On top of it all, Sanjay blackmails Jas (with pictures of Jas and Samira) into robbing his father's warehouse and Jas complies. In the warehouse, Jas is almost beaten to death by three boys or men he cannot recognize. The reader is left in the dark whether they are Jas' three former friends, Samira's three brothers or Sanjay's three thugs.

In the hospital, Jas has to confront his parents, who reveal his ethnic identity: he is white and his real name is Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden. The novel ends with Jas flirting with a British Asian nurse, performing as desi rudeboy once more.

The Author: Gautam Malkani

Gautam Malkani is a sociologist and journalist. He studied Social and Political Sciences at the University of Cambridge and mainly writes for the *Financial Times*. He was born in England in 1976 and grew up around Hounslow, where he was raised by his mother who was part of the Indian diaspora in Uganda before she moved to London[385]. In interviews, an article and on his own website, Malkani states that some of the fieldwork he conducted for his degree in Cambridge served as a basis for his debut novel *Londonstani*[386]. Malkani was shortlisted for the British Book Awards in the category "UK Writer of the Year".[387] *Londonstani* is his first and so far only novel.

4.3.2. History of Publication and Reception

Londonstani received a lot of attention in the literary field. According to Robert McCrum, long-term literary editor at *The Observer* until 2008, the publisher Fourth Estate had paid an advance of £300,000 for *Londonstani* and was hoping for the

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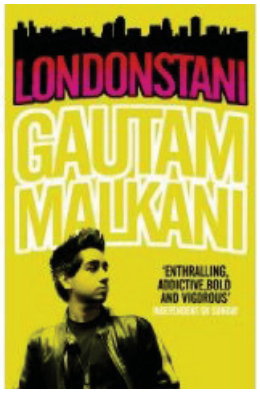
[385] Cf. Malkani, Gautam. "About the Author." Official Website of Gautam Malkani. 24 March 2007. http://www.gautammalkani.com/about_author.htm (accessed 12 May 2012).

[386] Cf. ibid. See also: Malkani, Gautam. "What's Right With Asian Boys?" *Financial Times* 21 April 2006. http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9f2bb9fc-d03b-11da-b160-0000779e2340.html#axzz1me8T23be (accessed 1 February 2009).
Graham, James. "An Interview with Gautam Malkani: Ealing Broadway, 6th November 2007." *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 6.1 (2008). http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2008/graham.html (accessed 5 April 2012).
This is relevant because Malkani's identity as the author of *Londonstani* is constructed through this information that he published about himself. More on Malkani's comments about his background and the implications for the reception of the novel can be found in the section below.

[387] Cf. "Gautam Malkani." *HarperCollins Author Profile*. http://www.harpercollins.co.uk/Authors/7427/gautam-malkani (accessed 12 March 2012).

novel to generate a lot of sales and income, similar to the success of *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane*.[388] However, the novel failed to sell as many copies as expected. According to Robert McCrum, it was pitched to the wrong audience: the publisher was "hungry to cash in on the White Teeth and Brick Lane market"[389], while Londonstani was directed to a younger reading public. In McCrum's words: "If it had been published, as its author once intended, as a teen novel, it might have found a secure place as a contemporary classroom cult."[390]

Possibly as a result of this, the paperback edition which was published one year after the hardback received a makeover (see below). According to Media and Literary Studies scholar James Graham, the publisher attempted to target a younger audience with the new cover (with more recognizable elements such as the London skyline and flash colour), pictures of Hounslow in the back of the novel as well as a facebook and myspace page.[391]



Fourth Estate
Hardback
(2 May 2006)

Harper Perennial
Paperback
(2 April 2007)

Source: http://www.4thestate.co.uk/author/gautam-malkani/ (accessed 1 February 2012).

The pictures at the back of the book and on myspace[392] represent the area in which the novel is set. The pictures of a plane, an allusion to Heathrow airport, and the Hounslow Central tube station are easy to recognize and link to the story. Among the other pictures are okra pods, saris, Bollywood movies and a torn poster of a turbaned

[388] Cf. McCrum, Robert. "Has the Novel Lost its Way?" *The Observer* 28 May 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/may/28/fiction.features?INTCMP=SRCH (accessed 1 February 2012).
[389] Ibid.
[390] Ibid.
[391] Cf. Graham 2008.
[392] "Londonstani." *myspace*. http://www.myspace.com/londonstani (accessed 26 May 2012).

person. The mobile phones as well as the blurry last picture, the graffiti and money hint at the protagonists' illegal trade and attempts to be 'gangstas'. Other pictures show 'bling' status symbols, such as a tuned car, rims and jewellery – the rhinestone Dollar sign for the rudeboys and the dangling costume jewellery for women. The websites on the other hand lead to British Asian music and entertainment sites such as Panjabi Hit Squad (actually misspelled in the book) and the BBC Asian Network.

These paratexts left me with a negative aftertaste: it seems as if the book – contrary to the novel – was falling into the 'authenticity' trap. It seems to emphasize that this subculture 'really exists', along the lines of: this is what desi rudeboy subculture looks like and this novel tells you its story. I agree with Sarah Brouillette who claims that the pictures, myspace and facebook sites as well as Malkani's own website, which offers reading guidelines, contribute to the "reactivation of a popular, even saleable conversation about authenticity".[393]

James Graham suspects that it was less the wrong marketing of *Londonstani*, i.e. that it was not marketed as a teen novel, but rather the novel's take on identities and unusual mixing and matching (unusual at least for a mass-market novel) that made it unpopular: "The problem, rather, is that it is literary and explores multicultural society in a style that, whilst being endorsed by reviewers, does not appear to have matched the prevailing taste of its audience."[394] In other words: readers were not as keen to read about a white teenager who assimilates to a desi subculture as they were to read about a poor young girl from Bangladesh who appropriates English culture on her way to independence. While I am sympathetic to the suspicion that Malkani's novel might represent the 'wrong' kind of multiculturalism for a mass audience that enjoyed the feel-good formula that worked so well for some bestsellers of the past, I also think that the novel has some stylistic and story-related shortcomings that might have contributed to its relatively mild success.

While many people in the book trade were disappointed by *Londonstani*'s 'performance', many reviews were quite positive. *The Observer*, *The TLS*, *The Times*, *The Independent on Sunday*, *The New Statesman* and many more published positive reviews. A wide selection of them is included in the paperback edition. The

[393] Brouillette, Sarah. "The Creative Class and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*." *Critique* 51 (2010). 8.
[394] Graham 2008.

reviews by *The Times of India*, BBC[395], *Asiana magazine* and Nihal Arthanayake[396] function as consecration by South Asian or British Asian institutions. Nihal Arthanayake writes:

> The first true twenty-first century British-Asian novel. Dealing not with dreams of the motherland but the British-Asian suburban experience, told through the eyes and mouths of mummy's boy rudeboys. *Londonstani* is fast, furious, curious and sobering. No cornershops, no flock wallpapered Indian restaurants, and no sitars and saris. It talks how the streets talk – they may not be the streets you recognize though.[397]

With "you" he could mean the (non-teenage) white middle-class that was looking for another feel-good multicultural novel, as James Graham suspected above.

A topic that comes up time and again in the history of reception of novels dealing with contemporary non-mainstream cultures is the issue (or question) of "authenticity". In an interview, Malkani appears to be annoyed by some reviewers' attempts to characterise *Londonstani* as an authentic tale of South Asian or British Asian life in greater London – and by the question of whether or not Malkani had the right to write such a story:

> The authenticity hurdle that reviewers have required me to jump implies Thomas Harris should have been disqualified from writing 'Silence of the Lambs' because he's not an authentic cannibal or serial killer. It also implies that *there is* a single authentic British Asian experience and that authentic experience can't be shared by someone who went to Cambridge and works for the FT.[398]

Troughout *Londonstani*, Malkani criticises notions of authenticity and promotes the idea of a performed identity and creative mixing and matching instead. This is one part of the story: there is no *single* authentic British Asian identity, so a text cannot be *the* authentic representation of British Asian boys either.

> Well, going back to the authenticity thing, the characters in Londonstani are basically defined by their differing levels of inauthenticity – that's kind of the point, it's about performance and pretence – so the whole authenticity test that the media kept applying to me becomes even more ridiculously meaningless. Just like there's no definitive Hounslow experience, there's no definitive rudeboy experience and there's no definitive rudeboy experience in Hounslow.[399]

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[395] "You need this book in your life" – Punjabi Hit Squad, BBC 1Xtra; and another quotation by Hard Kaur, *BBC Radio Asian Network* (cf. Malkani, Gautam. *Londonstani*. London: Harper Perennial, 2007.).
[396] DJ and radio/TV presenter, known for the BBC show "Asian Beats" with Bobby Friction and BBC Asian Network.
[397] Malkani, Gautam. *Londonstani*. London: Harper Perennial, 2007. Paratext.
[398] Graham 2008, emphasis added, S.v.L.
[399] Ibid.

However, Malkani himself (even if involuntarily) encourages the idea of the novel being an insider's work about something called desi rudeboy subculture by (repeatedly) mentioning his training as sociologist and that the novel started as his field research in Hounslow for a university thesis.[400] Sarah Brouillette compliments Malkani on his take on authenticity in the novel. She also points out that an association with debates on authenticity brings some attention back to the author, and evaluates Malkani's case as multilayered:

> While clearly dismantling the logic of any requirement that he accrue street credibility, he also appeals to an alternative source of validation: academic expertise. [...] Repeated claims to affiliation with an institutionally-based site of urban anthropology seek to validate him as a figure whose work unmasks the pretences behind the subculture to which he had only partly access. The forms of authority that signal his distance from the subculture, as he fled to Cambridge to become a member of London's creative class, are also what grant him the insight (and the platform and the reason) to understand its "real" meaning. Hence, as the novel raises the question of one's access to authenticity and attempts to exempt the author from it – so that Malkani might benefit from association with a known set of attractive controversies while avoiding being fundamentally implicated – he nevertheless labours to solidify his position as an authorized first-person observer of diverse social and cultural realities translated into literature.[401]

To me, this is not entirely convincing. There is a discrepancy between the novel questioning authenticity claims of any kind and Malkani's comments about his 'knowledge' and 'immersion experience' in the desi rudeboy scene in Hounslow. Malkani might have felt that he needed to claim some authority on the topic as *Londonstani* was his first novel. I think his comments are unfortunate as they invite discussions about the level of his 'insight'. Thus one might miss the criticism of all authenticity claims and Malkani's attempts to draw the reader's attention to the performance of identities.

After this overview of the most important aspects of the novels history of publication and reception, the following part will focus on what the novel actually does and how it achieves this.

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[400] This brings about a slightly different meaning of authenticity, this time in connection with representation: an authentic account, an appropriate and realistic depiction of reality.
[401] Brouillette 2010: 9.

4.3.3. Analysis of the Representation of Cultural Exchange

4.3.3.1. Contact Situation and Setting

The novel is set in Hounslow, London. Throughout the novel, there are many references to real London locations and consumer culture. Some examples for this are locations such as tube stations, Heathrow airport and Leicester Square in central London, references to Hip Hop and pop music artists as well as mobile phone models (that are usually very short-lived) and designer labels. Thus, the novel's time and space descriptions are recognizable, in particular to those readers who participate in the mentioned contemporary consumer culture.[402] There are also references to the debates around multiculturalism and Labour policies as well as references to race and to some extent also class conflicts.

Discrimination and violence against Asian or British Asian as well as African and Afro-British inhabitants of the area are mostly mentioned in connection with the parents' generation. Some incidents are set in the past and communicated through Jas' memory – "back when goras still shouted the word Paki" (99[403]) – and Ravi's comments, e.g.: "– I remember back in da day when most desis round here were like dat gimp, goes Amit. – Skinny saps pretendin like they were gora so no one treat'd dem like dey'd just got off da boat from Bombay, innit. But all d agora fuck'd wid dem anyway."[404] (23) But the mere fact that the desi rudeboys accepted Jas in their gang does not mean that there is no racism. Jas' mother is outraged when she finds out that her son dated a Muslim girl (cf. 335), and Hardjit opposes "cross-cultural dating" (cf. 145f.) vehemently. There are some additional current incidents of racism voiced by Jas ("desi dads [...] takin all kinds a abuse an shit from smelly skinheads, racist bosses" (110)) and Ravi's father ("lazy people who call my family Pakis when they come into my brother's shop to spend their dole money on beer and cigarettes" (181)). While the racist violence against Asians and British Asians, e.g. in the form

[402] However, a lot of the artists mentioned, such as Snoop Dog, Shah Rukh Khan, Jennifer Lopez, Beyoncé, Christina Aguilera, Panjabi Hit Squad, BBC Asian Network and some other references cannot be pinned down to one specific year, as they were popular over a longer period of time. This might make the novel less prone to be interpreted in only one specific context, as many of the addressed conflicts (e.g. the multiculturalism debate and questions about accepting differences and diversity) continue to play a role. I found it surprising that there is no reference to 9/11 or 7/7. However, two hints suggest that the novel is set roughly between 2002 and 2005: Labour was still in power according to Mr Ashwood's comments and the Nokia 3510i did not come out earlier.

[403] The page numbers in this thesis refer to the paperback edition published by Harper Perennial in 2007: Malkani, Gautam. *Londonstani*. London: Harper Perennial, 2007.

[404] The characters in *Londonstani* do not speak standard British English, but a made-up mix out of slang, sms style and almost phonetically written Caribbean and US-American vernacular. In the following chapter, I will not mark every non-standard spelling with [*sic!*] – there would be hardly any sentence without this marker.

of so-called "paki-bashing" by neo-Nazis, appears to have diminished (cf. 99), racist attitudes are still present. Racist behaviour can be observed among unemployed as well as middle-class characters and is not limited to any class or ethnicity.

Jas' descriptions of the area and its inhabitants lead to the conclusion that the demographics in the area have changed in the last decades: the majority of people are now Asian or British Asian, with a few Afro-British citizens and a minority of white British. Halal butchers on high street and satellite dishes with Om symbols, Khanda Sahibs (flags with the Sikh Khanda symbol) and crescent moons dominate the cityscape (cf. 17, 85). Hounslow has many chicken restaurants – an indicator for a significant Muslim population who would not frequent fast food chains that offer pork, and possibly also for Hindu customers who would not eat beef – and ethnic food chains (213), with Arabic food chains taking over.

Do the ethnic numbers which differ substantially from the national average (even the London average) hint at reversed power structures in the context of the novel? There are no apparent dependencies on white Britain. Neither are there references to paths that are closed to the protagonists because of their skin colour. The only limit is their bad education and lack of degrees. This is not explicitly linked to their class background or ethnicity – the implied reasons are their indifference and laziness. Even the police is not described as racist and the police officers' ethnicity is not mentioned. The only dependencies one can spot are of an economic nature, i.e. the need to attract and retain customers. These customers are neither raced nor gendered, though. The boys' parents are all well off[405] and own stores or other businesses, houses, cars, etc. In Jas' specific case the power relations are reversed: he wants to belong to the gang and is ready to assimilate to their rules and it is Hardjit who has the power to decide who belongs and who does not.

The setting is described as a decaying and desolate place[406], but also close to Heathrow airport. The three main associations with Heathrow are: travel, migration and work. The proximity to Heathrow offers jobs, in particular in the service sector, dismissed by Jas and the others as "helping goras catch planes to places so they could turn their own skin brown" (23). On the other hand, it is also a place where

[405] E.g. Hardjit's family (cf. 59).
[406] The novel does not comment on why the parents of Hardjit and the others do not move to a nicer area. But the description of their families' homes and their parents' occupations indicate that they are middle-class and are financially secure.

immigrants from the Subcontinent might arrive in the UK[407] – or the other way round a "gateway to India" (51) and a possible link to many families' country of origin. Many inhabitants in this fictional Hounslow are from the Subcontinent and Jas refers to some instances of cultural exchange, such as 'religious blending' (cf. 51), the joint celebration of religious holidays, such as Diwali and Eid (cf. 174), and accommodation of different languages by institutions such as the hospital (e.g. by putting up signs in different languages, such as English, Urdu, Panjabi, Hindi (332)). The majority of these exchanges are explained to take place between different South Asian and some Black British communities (rather than between South Asians and white). Jas observes that Somali asylum seekers are the new outsiders (cf. 100) and that a more current wave of immigrants had brought Chinese people to the area: "another Chinese face [...] it's their turn now. Those guys are coming the way a black and desis" (100).

It is in this context that the agents in *Londonstani* act. The setting and set up of the context have an effect on the direction of transfer. While according to Jas the protagonists' parents tried to adapt to mainstream British society in the past, Jas himself attempts to assimilate to the desi subculture.

In the following passage, I will have a look at how the characters are constructed, how they create and perform their identities and how the information is communicated. The transfer processes of the desi gang, the main characters' parents as well as Jas' selection and appropriation decisions will be scrutinized in detail.

4.3.3.2. Characterisation and Narrative Transmission

Jas is the protagonist and first-person narrator[408] of *Londonstani*. Thus, every piece of information is limited and biased by Jas' perspective. This includes information about the other characters in the novel, too. Only the dialogues provide the reader with slightly less biased information, although the dialogues are also subject to Jas' selection process in the construction of his story.

The representation of Jas' inner world, his thoughts, fears and dreams is particularly interesting with regard to cultural exchange processes as it allows an

[407] Jas' description of travel for pleasure is linked to white people while travelling connected to migration is associated with characters of black or brown skin.

[408] There is an exception: the second chapter starts in second person narration (cf. 137-145) that is only interrupted by longer dialogues. It appears like some kind of soliloquy, an explanation of what had happened, or Jas revisiting his decisions. However, this revisiting happens strangely without any judgement from a later or more mature perspective. The effect of this technique adds rather to the estrangement of the protagonist and the story from the reader than anything else.

analysis of the motivations, mediators, the selection process etc., i.e. how the mixing and matching works, for Jas as an individual as well as for the gang (see more below in the respective section).

Jas tells the reader what has happened after he joined Hardjit's gang in retrospective, but there is no critical distance; Jas does not judge his actions from a later or more mature perspective. The only instances in which Jas judges his former behaviour refer to the time before Jas joined the desi rudeboys – and in this case he criticises his former self as weak and despicable (through his 'new' desi lense). The readers learn about Jas' ethnic identity, i.e. that he is white and actually called Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden, only in the very end when he has to confront his family in the hospital. This twist leads to the questioning of everything one has "heard" from Jas. As the solution of the riddle only occurs at the very end, the narrator's unreliability is revealed rather late.

The limited perspective also means that the reader perspective is not privileged compared to Jas'. In the case of Sanjay, this leads to the reader being as surprised as Jas himself when it turns out that Sanjay is a criminal and only used Jas to get at Jas' father.[409]

However, Jas' perspective can also be used to expose other characters, such as his desi friends and the former teacher Mr Ashwood. On the one hand, Jas communicates how the desi rudeboys see themselves and how they perform as if they were hardcore ghetto inhabitants, but on the other hand Jas also provides some qualification. Jas tells the reader that Hardjit, Arun and Ravi only play 'gangstas' when they are not at home and that they behave differently at home, where they are rather obedient to their parents' wishes (see more below: "Cut and Mix: the Desi Gang").

The narrative also reveals who the mediators are. In Jas' endeavour to assimilate to the desi rudeboy subculture, Hardjit functions as a mediator (actively chosen by Jas) who teaches Jas how to be a 'proper' rudeboy. It is from Hardjit's tips and commands that Jas formulates his rudeboy rules. The attempts by the former teacher Mr Ashwood to use Jas and later Sanjay as role models, who could function as mediators to the desi rudeboys and promote a more conformist lifestyle, fail.

[409] The whole tax evasion scheme and "masterplan" with Jas' father's warehouse appears a bit over the top, as do the mafia allusions and references to the TV Series *The Sopranos*. This section is one of the novel's weaker parts, both in terms of plot and the means of aesthetic representation.

The (presumably white) teacher, Mr (Thomas) Ashwood, hopes that Jas might serve as a good example for Hardjit and his crew and get them to integrate into "mainstream, multicultural society" (128). When this fails, Mr Ashwood hopes that Sanjay could act as a mediator for Jas and the others and convince them to at least integrate into work life – but this 'pipe dream' fails as Sanjay turns them into real criminals. James Graham identifies Mr Ashwood as "the novel's voice of liberal conscience [...] as he attempts to instil in them [the boys] the value of education and the institutional role of the BBC as the nation's 'cultural glue'"[410]. However, Mr Ashwood is exposed to be oversimplifying things (and to have limited understanding), e.g. when he asks the boys why they came here if they were not interested in engaging with society, to which Ravi answers: "We didn't fucking come here, innit [...] we was fucking born here." (127) The boys are "aware of his well-intentioned designs for their collective destiny, but they also refuse to let their experience become an exemplary, feel-good story of the marginalised making good in the mainstream."[411] Or as Jas puts it: "this in't Good Will Hunting, that's all. You in't Robin Williams or the Gandhi a Hounslow, sir." (130)

To get back to the point of perspective, the carefully regulated information is one of the means of the novel to play with reader expectations. Ruvani Ranasinha states that the reader is "deliberately" left in the dark about Jas' "precise ethnic origins" [412]. Why deliberately? Because then the twist in the end is even more powerful in revealing reader prejudice. If it were easier to unravel, the effect would be weaker. But which utterances and descriptions lead the reader to think that Jas was British Asian – and are there other hints towards his whiteness?

The novel starts in medias res. Hardjit attacks a white boy on a pretext and his friends – among them Jas – support him. Utterances by Hardjit such as "Call me or any a *ma bredrens* a Paki again an I'ma mash u an yo family" (3, emphasis added, S.v.L.) as well as Jas' accounts such as "*The white kid* was now lookin me straight in the eye" (12, emphasis added, S.v.L.) invite the reader to think that Jas might be British Asian as well as Hardjit, Ravi and Amit. Furthermore, Jas' name can be misleading, too, in particular when another rudeboy, whose name is Jasinder, wanted to have the same nickname, but lost to Jas (cf. 24). Jas' full name and last name are

[410] Graham 2008.
[411] ibid.
[412] Ranasinha, Ruvani. "Racialized masculinities and postcolonial critique in contemporary British Asian male-authored texts." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 45.3 (2009). 297-307.

not revealed until the very end of the novel. Jas tells us that he is ashamed of it and does not like to use it (without explaining why): "Me, I had one a them extra long surnames that nobody'd ever pronounce proply." (24) This *could* hint at an Indian or Panjabi name. In the context of the gang, the dominance of British Asians in the area and Jas' condescending talk about other white people as goras[413], it is hard to imagine that Jas is actually white himself.

In addition, Jas uses Panjabi words when he talks, but also in his thoughts (e.g. 30 and 177). Jas makes much ado about celebrating Diwali (cf. 174) and also respects the Hindi ritual of not shaving between death and cremation after Arun's suicide (cf. 288). When talking about his family as well as Hardjit's, Amit's and Ravi's families, he compares them without any qualification, is annoyed about his mother's pashmina shawls and chicken biryani (cf. 33) and scared that his parents might be upset about his Muslim girlfriend (cf. 174, they are indeed: cf. 335). His mother even throws a "big Bollywood soap-opera showdown" (330) in the hospital. And finally, Samira calls him "just another typical desi guy" (290) and a "typical, straight off-the-boat desi" (291).

However, these elements are just circumstantial evidence and no definite proof. At a second glance, there are a couple of hints that Jas could, in fact, be white. Jas is said to look like Justin Timberlake (cf. 28), James Bond and Indiana Jones (cf. 102) and compares himself to Johnny Depp, Pierce Brosnan and Brad Pitt (cf. 149), all of whom are white. He also imagines himself as a "cross between Andy Garcia and Shah Rukh Khan" (149).[414] Jas has to learn Panjabi, which is a hint that he did not learn it at home. However, this is not limited to whites as some of the British-born children of South Asian immigrants do not speak their parents' mother tongues either. And finally, one of Mr Ashwood's comments – "Your idea of diversity seems to be limited to recruiting Jas" (125) – becomes a hint once one knows that Jas is white. Before, the comment could also be referring to Jas' weakness that distinguishes him from his friends.

In fact, all the hints mentioned above that he could be desi – except Samira calling him a "typical, straight off-the-boat desi" (291) – can have different explanations. The chicken biryani and the clothes have become part of a globalised

[413] Sometimes it is condescending, sometimes just distanced: "like how goras do" (149), "as goras say" (230).
[414] The cover of the Harper Perennial paperback seems to have picked up precisely this cross. It is suggestive in a way, but does not give an explicit hint to whether he is British Asian or white.

consumer culture with 'ethnic food' available everywhere as well as Indian clothes. Jas' mother's concern about her son's behaviour does not have to be related to his assimilation to a different subculture, but could also be related to 'normal' teenage trouble. And her unease because of his Muslim girlfriend is not necessarily a hint that she is South Asian, but simply that she is prejudiced. Samira's comment, finally, reveals that there can be more than one understanding of being a desi. She shares the definition of the boys that is not tied to ethnic origin but rather lifestyle choices, language and behaviour.

The limited information provided by the protagonist leaves quite a lot of room for the readers to fill in the blanks, in particular in relation to Jas's ethnic identity and reliability. The twist in the end reveals that Jas' desiness was even more performed than expected. The readers already knew that he had to try very hard in order to fulfil the desi rules and expectations, but the fact that he is white and was nevertheless accepted as 'authentic' or 'proper desi' for some time by his mates, hints at the fact that all of them accepted desiness to be a matter of performance rather than hereditary characteristics. Jas himself describes his performance as a deliberate choice he has made (cf. 23). This "pulls the rug from the very notion of an authentic British Asian identity"[415]. The novel rejects the notion of inherent identities and instead represents cultural exchange processes through which the characters can "mix and match". The desi rudeboys in *Londonstani* construct their own (group) identity and perform it. The concrete way in which they do this stands in opposition to the OED definitions of "desi" that are based on ethnicity and the South Asian diasporas.[416] Ethnicity is not the prime concern or identifier of the Hounslow desi rudeboys. They show different definitions of identity and belonging (see below).

Acts of labelling communities and questions of authenticity are mocked on several levels. Jas explicitly comments on the fact that people are trying to label their scene: "People're always tryin to put a label on our scene. That's the problem with having a fucking scene. First we was rudeboys, then we be Indian niggas, than

[415] Saha, Anamik. "'Londonstani' by Gautam Malkani; 'Tourism' by Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal." *Darkmatter. In the ruins of Imperial culture*. 14 June 2007. http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2007/06/14/londonstani-by-gautam-malkani-tourism-by-nirpal-singh-dhaliwal/ (accessed 8 June 2010).

[416] Cf. "desi." *Oxford English Dictionary*. http://www.oed.com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/259285 (accessed 26 May 2012). Although there is a strong connection to the word's origin from the Subcontinent, "desi" actually means "indigenous, rural, from the country, person or thing from the country" and thus displays some openness to be appropriated for other contexts to a certain extent. (The sources mentioned in the OED remain linked to the Subcontinent, however.) In the case of the noun and particularly linked to "Indian music, dance, theatre, etc." the OED sums up that these "local or folk styles […] are still to a certain extent variable and developing" (ibid.).

rajamuffins, then raggastanis, Britasian, fucking Indobrits." (5) But these attempts of labelling are evaded by the boys who came up with their own name and definition. This self-definition opposes the standard definition of "desi" which is based on ethnicity, and it also questions whether there is such a thing as "authentic desiness". This, however, does not keep Jas and the others from trying very hard to perform 'proper' desiness, but the emphasis here lies on the fact that it is a performance. Furthermore, the reader is mocked to a certain extent or at least confronted with his/her own prejudice (why else should it come as a surprise that Jas is white?). The fact that Jas is abandoned by his former friends in the end leaves the readers with the question of whether Jas failed because he broke the rules – dated a Muslim girl and interfered in his friend's family business – or whether his former friends are so unforgiving because Jas was never fully accepted in the first place (e.g. because of his whiteness).

In the following section, the desi rudeboy gang will be analysed with regard to their engagement in cultural exchange – or "cut'n'mix",[417] as Dick Hebdige phrased it – in particular the way in which they piece together their defining characteristics as well as how they perform according to their own rules.

4.3.3.3 Cut and Mix: the Desi Gang

The group around Hardjit is depicted as a gang within a desi rudeboy subculture. Hints to there being a subculture instead of just a singular group are references to other desi rudeboys such as Davinder and his friends, desi events and music, Samira's perspective of the boys as part of a bigger or subcultural context and the fact that Jas' new status symbols work outside the small group, too. In addition, Jas' thoughts about labelling – actually his making fun of the media who attempt to label their scene – also suggest that they are not the only ones who try to define the subculture.

> Subcultures are groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it. They may represent *themselves* this way [... or] be represented like this by others.[418]

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[417] Cf. Hebdige, Dick. *Cut'n'Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music*. London: Methuen, 1987.
In the above-mentioned book, the subcultures sociologist Dick Hebdige investigates links between music and identity and emphasizes how dynamic these relations are (cf. ibid. xi.). This is why I found the term "cut and mix" particularly fitting for the analysis of *Londonstani*, where contemporary music scenes and status symbols play an important role in creating a sense of subcultural group identity for the protagonists who mix and match elements from a variety of different sources.

[418] Gelder, Ken. "The Field of Subcultural Studies." *The Subcultures Reader*. Ken Gelder (ed.). 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2005. 1. "Subcultures represent 'noise' (as opposed to sound):

In *Londonstani*, we can witness both types of labelling: characters such as Samira and Andy perceive the boys as part of a subculture, and Hardjit, Jas and the others see and represent themselves as desi rudeboys, too.

But what is a desi rudeboy supposed to be? Desi is defined as an adjective or noun relating to a diaspora from the Indian Subcontinent. "In British slang, in particular, desi is now commonly used to describe a contemporary urban subculture whose participants are mainly second-generation youths from the Subcontinent as well as ethnically hybrid cultural trends in music, dance, food and fashion."[419] According to Malkani, the word "desi" is also a "self-determined alternative to the word "paki"".[420] So while "paki" was imposed and has racist connotations, "desi" is a chosen label. The structure of the novel relates to a development of the Subcontinental diaspora in the UK (from a post-war period until today), as James Graham succinctly and convincingly explains:

> Subdivided into three sections, Paki, Sher and Desi, this narrative allegorises a broader shift in British Asian identity from the experience of prejudice and victimhood (Paki), through aggressive self-segregation (Sher), to active participation in the reconstitution of Britishness (Desi – meaning 'countryman'). In doing so, it also confronts its readers not with a narrative of British-Asian ethnicity, but with the emergence of a specifically *subcultural* identity: the desi rudeboy. […] The subculture as it is represented is some distance from the notion of a distinct ethnic, faith or racial *community* that official multiculturalism, and, by extension, novels marketed under the rubric 'multicultural', are charged with the task of making *knowable* to the British public.[421]

In the case of the novel, the ethnic implications of "desi" have become less important for the subculture – otherwise Jas would not be included. It is still apparent, though, that all the other members have family ties to the Subcontinent. However, their definition of belonging works along different lines, e.g. conformism to their rudeboy rules.

"Rudeboy", on the other hand, is a term appropriated from Caribbean youth culture: "Social archaeology reveals that 'rudeboy', originating in the Kingston ghettoes, was copied from Caribbean youngsters too tough to be molested by white

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interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media." (Hebdige, Dick. "Subculture. The Meaning of Style." 1979. *The Subcultures Reader*. Ken Gelder (ed.). 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2005. 121.)

[419] Paganoni, Maria Cristina and Roberto Pedretti. "I am What I Speak: Multicultural Identity in *Londonstani*." *Culture* (Annale del Dipartimento di Lingue e Culture Contemporanee della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dell'Università degli Studi di Milano) 21 (2008). 425.

[420] Malkani 2006.

[421] Graham 2008.

racists and respected for their 'cool' behaviour and dangerous aura."[422] While Hounslow and in particular the rather rich family homes of Hardjit and the others are not part of a ghetto, the boys still use the term "rudeboy" to benefit from its connotations of strength and coolness (see also below). The term "desi rudeboy" is in this sense a self-chosen label and a result of cultural exchange or mixing and matching on different levels.

Language

The appropriation of elements from different cultures is particularly visible with regard to the language. Here one can spot a mix of British English, Panjabi, Afro-American and/or Caribbean slang as well as abbreviations used in text messaging.[423] In some cases, words from different languages are included in the boys' vocabulary, such as rudeboy and battyboy (Caribbean origin), or gora, banchod, kiddaan (as insults or greeting respectively, cf. 14) and other Panjabi words. But the mixing and matching also refers to the way of speaking, e.g. the pronunciation of "th" as "d" – characteristic for Jamaican créole and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE)[424] – or references such as "the man could tut like a black brother" (15). Maria Cristina Paganoni and Roberto Pedretti rightly point out that there is a gap between the class connotations of the boys' slang – i.e. working-class idiolects – and their own middle-class background.[425] They claim that "[t]his motley assemblage is facilitated by popular cultural trends, in this case exposure to Afro music genres, especially rap music."[426] Throughout the novel there are references to US Hip Hop and some of the artists' "gangsta" image, so the boys' use of this kind of slang suggests that they attempt to acquire some of the connotations (strength, 'badass') for themselves.

Paganoni and Pedretti have identified different speech patterns even among the desi rudeboys and suggest that

> the extent to which each member of the youth group violates linguistic norms [shows] the stance the boys are adopting through discourse and, consequently, the kind of identity they are self-fashioning and performing. [...

[422] Mitchell, Michael. "Escaping the Matrix: Illusions and Disillusions of Identity in Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006)." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+: New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Eckstein, Lars *et al.* (eds). Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008. 330.
[423] For example: "U banchod b calling us lot Paki one more time n I swear we'll cut'chyu up, innit." (4)
[424] Cf. Paganoni *et al.* 2008: 430.
[425] Cf. ibid.
[426] Ibid.

> T]he greater the degree of morphosyntactic violation is, the tougher the self that adopts it becomes.[427]

I find their thesis convincing. The boys' language communicates their unity to outsiders (e.g. parents and teachers), but at the same time, single members of the group can use deviations from the shared language in order to position themselves within the group.

Even though there are slight variations, the language shared by the group members is part of the group's identity. Through their language they communicate belonging. When Jas "got the tone just right" nobody makes fun of him (9), while he is the target of mockery and abuse when his "lack a rudeboy panache" (7) is exposed in earlier scenes. Sanjay teaches Jas how to improve his performance, in particular also with regard to what and how to say it, and Jas becomes more successful (at least for some time).

However, in addition to its inclusive function, the language can also work as a mechanism of exclusion, e.g. when it comes to the parents. One of Hardjit's rules includes using abbreviations and complicated English words to confuse parents – and Jas draws a parallel to "goras blind[ing] their parents with science" (121). It's basically about changing registers according to the situation.

While the desi rudeboys in *Londonstani* do not define their group or limit membership to ethnic identity, they are rather explicit about who they exclude from their group. They despise people they call "coconuts"[428], people from the South Asian diaspora that are educated and in their opinion assimilated. For Jas, it boils down to a choice everybody can make – just as he chose to perform according to the rudeboy rules. In his eyes, educated British Asians who speak Standard English and have good jobs have 'sold out' and made the wrong choice (cf. 23).

The desi rudeboys' misogynism and homophobia leads to an exclusion of women and homosexuals. And they also particularly frown upon mixed-raced couples. Thus it is a rule implied by Hardjit that a member of their gang is not allowed to date outside their own race or ethnic group (cf. 49, 66), which is strange because ethnicity does not play a role in general membership, as the inclusion of Jas illustrates.

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[427] Ibid.: 432. Paganoni and Pedretti have convincingly contrasted Jas', Amit's and Ravi's and finally Hardjit's speech patterns in a table. Two examples: while Jas says "you", Hardjit says "u" or "chyu". While Jas says "nothin" to express "nothing", Hardjit says "nuffink".

[428] They accuse a British Asian man in the car next to them of being "white […] inside his brown skin" (21).

The Characters' Parents

A large part of the construction of the represented desi rudeboy group is based on an opposition to the members' parents. The boys criticise their parents' assimilation to British society which they identify in their parents' posh accents (as far as it shows in the dialogues, it is 'only' Standard BE) and their liberal interpretation of religion, in particular the sending out of Christmas cards with nativity scenes (cf. 79) and the blending of Sikh and Hindu gods (cf. 51). The sons interpret this as a betrayal of their cultural roots and as a sign of weakness[429].

In his performance of desiness, which serves as the definition for the rest of the group, Hardjit attempts to link his understanding of ethnicity, cultural heritage and religion with what he sees as power and strength. When he speaks about cultural heritage, he refers to martial arts (cf. 11). He has a tiger (symbol for India) and a khanda (Sikh symbol) tattooed on his biceps (cf. 5). He uses religion as a pretext to pick a fight. So while Hardjit, Amit and Ravi criticise their parents' lack of religiousness, Hardjit's father in return complains that Hardjit "abuses his Sikh religion" (340). He criticises his son's instrumentalisation of religion to play 'the hard boy'.

The sons also criticise their parents' assimilation to the British middle-class mainstream – but in fact their parents actually engage in a more complex cultural exchange process: they also mix and match.[430] Ravi's father, for example, uses a 'business accent' (probably Standard BE) at work and a more vernacular way of speaking at home (which Jas calls "Bombay mode" and Ravi's mother "Straight off the bloody boat" accent) (cf. 179). In any case, the parents actually show an appropriation of certain aspects and a selective use of them.

The boy's parents are successful and have jobs in the British economy, they built houses and even send out Christmas cards, but they also maintain cultural practices from the Subcontinent that are not limited to Indian clothing and food. They e.g. organise satsangs[431] to communicate their social status in their community. And they also have imported the caste system and passed it on to their children (cf.

[429] In a conversation with Mr Ashwood Ravi explains his "anti-integration, anti-assimilation" behaviour with his wish to teach his parents "some muthafuckin self-respect" (126).
[430] Interestingly they are even scared to be "westrenised" (266, [*sic!*]) or have their sons westernized by Jas (cf. also 261ff., 265-270).
[431] A kind of worship meeting that also expresses the high social status of the one who organises it.

92 and 239), which at some point results in a conflict when Arun's parents abuse their daughter-in-law to be because she is not Brahmin.

One of the problems with the parents' way of mixing and matching is that their understanding of traditions is rigid and arbitrary with no room for flexible solutions.[432] With the exception of Jas and Arun, nobody dares to question the traditions: "It's the way things are done." (91) Thus Ravi suggests that Arun should just have chosen an arranged marriage to avoid the complications imposed by his parents on the bride's side instead of revisiting and adapting traditions to an altered reality. Ravi's father even refuses to acknowledge equal rights for women and argues that they are dependent on men, "underperforming assets" and "redundant" (180f.). Jas sums up that by "Respect Your Elders" the parents actually mean that their children should obey them instead of questioning their 'orders' (cf. 244). The sad result of Arun's parents' insisting on rigid cultural practices and their failure to give Arun a reason for the traditions or find a solution to the situation is Arun's suicide (cf. 266). The characters' utterances and behaviour indicate an essentialist view on traditions. While Jas at least questions some of the practices, nobody supports the idea that traditions are constructed and created through selection and interpretation processes. Furthermore, nobody questions the motivation behind the selection and enforcement of certain practices.

An additional aspect that relates the parents to the construction of the subculture has been identified by scholars such as Ruvani Ranasinha (and commented on by Gautam Malkani himself). They argue that the constellation of fathers who are mostly absent and mothers who are rather dominant could be seen as a source of the sons' macho behaviour.[433] This interpretation does not appear obvious to me, but some text passages in the novel support it. However, I believe that the plot also works without this understanding of the role of the parents. There are indeed some references to the mothers displaying a "Rottweiler routine" (74), controlling their sons and dominating their husbands. And the word 'routine' implies that this happens on a regular basis. Emotional blackmailing is also part of the routine, complaints about how the sons are a source of shame to the mothers because of the sons' "lack of respect for their elders" (73), often linked to the mothers throwing a "big Bollywood soap-opera showdown" (330). Jas, who has experienced many of

[432] Cf. Mitchell 2008: 335.
[433] Cf. Ranasinha 2009: 302.

those showdowns and complaints about the ungrateful sons, concludes that Hardjit's mother is "addicted to being offended" (74).[434]

The parents provide their 19-year old sons with food and shelter, mobile phones and cars – and demand obedience in return. As Jas points out, the parent's demand for respect is actually a demand for obedience (cf. 244). Ruvani Ranasinha points out that the mobile phones do not only function as status symbols and penis-enlargements, but also allow the parents to control the boys to a certain extent.[435] The boys' macho performance – some even call it hypermasculine performance – forms a stark contrast to their behaviour at home. At home and on the phone with their mothers, they switch to a different, more submissive register (cf. 16 and 73f.). In fact, Malkani gives almost a textbook definition of hypermasculinity at the end of the novel (cf. 324).[436] This last part struck me as rather over the top and overly explicit. In addition, this also interrupts the narration and clearly privileges some kind of content above the form.

Status Symbols and Group Rules: Results of Cultural Exchange

The desi rudeboys' performances and symbols can be summarized to have two main communication goals: strength and 'manliness' (in their case virility, physical fitness, dominance; in fact, rather macho ideas of what being a man could mean). To this goal, they appropriate elements from different cultures and subcultures, e.g. Sikh symbols, US and Bollywood movies, Hip Hop and AAVE or working-class language.

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[434] Jas even accuses the mothers of living their lives through the sons, in particular with reference to Arun's mother and her interference with his wedding. The above-mentioned behaviour is not limited to the Asian mothers, though. Jas' mother repeatedly tries to track him down through his mobile phone and keeps asking questions about his whereabouts and what he does (cf. e.g. 202). However, she seems to be particularly concerned about her own reputation if her son fails: "... you'll be destroying your life. And my life. How will I show my face?" (202). And Jas' account of his mother's relationship to his father is that she orders him around (cf. 323). He also complains about "desi dads [...] takin all kinds a abuse an shit from smelly skinheads, racist bosses *an our mums*." (110, emphasis added, S.v.L.) This is another indication for the 'strong mothers, weak fathers' theory, and a particular strong one as Jas mentions the mothers' dominance over the fathers in the same breath as racist abuse by third parties.

[435] Cf. Ranasinha 2009: 297 and 302. There is also an explicit reference to the control issue in the novel: Rudeboy Rule #2 entitles the rudeboy to have the "blingest phone" in the family (paid for by the parents), but prestige and freedom come with the price that the phones "allow [...] your parents to keep tabs on you." (41)

[436] "You gotta be the man a the house by being harder than your mum stead a being like your dad. All this shit'd be a lot easier if your dad was harder than your mum cos it's gotta be easier to be like your dad than it is to try an not be like your mum. If you try an not be like something, you might try too much, innit. And if you try an be harder than something stead a being as hard as something, there in't no limit to how hard you gotta be." (324)

The wish to appear strong can be linked to past experiences of racism: the desi rudeboys have decided not to be victims (like many South Asians of their parents' generation who are reported to have been the victims of white gang violence), but attack others themselves. Assertions of 'manliness' (and hypermasculinity issues) such as boasting about their sex life and penis size as well as the verbal abuse and discrimination of homosexuals are part of their strategy to appear strong. In addition, the rudeboys dress their carefully sculpted bodies (in particular Hardjit, cf. 4, 5) with their "perfectly shaped facial hair" (4) in expensive designer clothes[437] to show that they can afford it. Accessories such as Sikh symbols, tattoos and military tags complete the picture.

> While "bling" culture is located as part of a wider, pervasive consumerism, *Londonstani* also hints that the young Asian men are asserting the hyper-materialism of those first-generation Asian migrants who display the badge of material success as a symbol of immigrant success: "we have made it in the West".[438]

In the novel, the boys show off their mobile phones and designer clothes, while the parents show off their cars, houses, appliances etc.

In the case of consumerism, the cultural exchange processes work both ways: while the represented form of desi subculture appropriates elements from global mainstream music and clothing culture, the "market" has also appropriated or commodified aspects of desi subculture. The following two references in the novel are particularly revealing in how desi music became increasingly available and mainstream. Jas and his friends worked as bhangra (and R'n'B) DJs and MCs for some time, but then stopped after too many other people tried the same. "In business speak it's called price-deflation prompted by oversupply. [...] the market got too overcrowded" (44). Secondly, the characters observe an increase in desi nights in London clubs (cf. 177) – in such central and affluent places as Leicester Square and the West End, so quite central and not in more 'marginal' areas such as the East End or Slough. This representation of commodification of desi subculture – music in this case – can be read as a reference to the rise in marketing strategies that exoticise Britsh-Asian (sub)cultural production.

The desi rudeboys recruit their role models from Hip Hop music and fiction, from Hollywood as well as from Bollywood movies, in particular Shah Rukh Khan

[437] While at the beginning of the novel, they seem to wear a couple of fake labels – "Dolce & Gabbana" (4) – they can afford the originals after they work for Sanjay.
[438] Ranasinha 2009: 301.

and Arnold Schwarzenegger.[439] There are constant reminders that everything is a performance, in particular Jas' comment about Hardjit's preparation for a big fight that involves working out, careful choice of clothes and posing in front of the mirror. Jas compares this to prostitutes preparing for work (cf. 86).

In the represented desi rudeboy subculture, ethnicity is only one part of many facets and not even an exclusive one (Jas is allowed to be part of it although he is white): Ruvani Ranasinha convincingly argues that the boys "use "ethnicity" as a way of bolstering their masculinity"[440], one of the more explicit images being the Sikh tattoo, a Karha and something orange (symbolising Sikh) that feature in the bashing of Daniel in the beginning of the novel. Hardjit and the others particularly refer to religion and cultural heritage as reasons to pick a fight. There is e.g. Hardjit's self-chosen mission to prevent Sikh girls from dating Muslim boys.[441] At one point, Hardjit and others refer to Empire and Partition history to start a fight between Sikhs and Muslims, claiming they carry on the fighting that took place on the Subcontinent. Jas mocks them as he feels it is just a pretext to pick a fight:

> Mr Ashwood taught us about the bloody partition a India an Pakistan during History lessons. What we didn't learn, though, was how some people who weren't even born when it happened or awake during History lessons remembered the bloodshed better than people who were. (49)

The gang's status symbols and elements of performance are appropriated from a variety of sources. The outcome can be seen as the result of cultural exchange processes, in the context of subcultures also called "cut'n'mix" by Dick Hebdige[442] (or mix'n'match in more colloquial terms). In the represented subculture, lifestyle and consumer choices are more important than ethnicity. The subculture (its rules of

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[439] Cf. 70 and 149. They also admire Vin Diesel (cf. 99) and compare their own situations with films and TV productions: *Reservoir Dogs* (cf. 99), *Good Will Hunting* (cf. 130), *The Matrix* (cf. 231f.), *East Enders* (cf. 189), *Star Wars*: Sikhs are the "Warriors of Hinduism [...] like Jedi Knights." (81) This can be interpreted as a sign of their detachedness from 'real life' or their search for orientation not through their parents, school or politics, but fiction. Sanjay e.g. is portrayed to watch the TV series *The Sopranos* – a very popular series set in the mafia milieu in New Jersey – before he starts to blackmail Jas, which can be read as part of Sanjay's 'gangster' performance (the difference to the boys' performance is just that his criminal acts make him a real criminal instead of a "wannabe" like the boys (cf. 167)). However, the mafia allusion appears a bit over the top – or possibly also as a hint for which audience the novel was written. A teen audience might know (and admire) the Sopranos and probably like the reference.

[440] Ranasinha 2009: 300. "The threading together of religious markers of identity and hyper-masculine violence is visualized in this passage by the blows delivered by Hardjit's muscled, sculpted biceps that carry a tattoo of a Sikh Khanda symbol. At the same time, Jas [...] highlights the role-playing and posturing machismo of the group, lending a comic edge to the narrative." (ibid.)

[441] Cf. 80 and see 145f.: "Dey can take our food, but dey can never take our women."

[442] Cf. Hebdige 1987.

inclusion and exclusion, language, status symbols etc.) is constructed through a pragmatic pick and mix from different sources to communicate strength, their understanding of manliness as well as coolness. Belonging to the desi rudeboy group is not exclusive to British Asians as Jas' case proves, but belonging depends on the obedience to the rules. Dave Gunning sees here a parallel to the families and the rudeboy gang: "Belonging to the group becomes about adherence to these rules, rather than the deeper sense of social bonding."[443] Jas learns this the hard way. In the following part, the representation of Jas' cultural exchange process will be analysed.

4.3.3.4. Cultural Exchange in an Unexpected Direction

In the representation of Jas' assimilation to the desi rudeboy subculture, one can identify many facets of cultural exchange processes. Jas' motivation for the assimilation is expressed explicitly: he wants to escape his role as a victim and be part of a stronger group. He is looking for protection, something to identify with and for somebody whose lead he can follow. Hardjit's motivation to help Jas (and act as a mediator) is also expressed explicitly: Hardjit wants to look like Shah Rukh Kahn – because the "Bollywood hero always takes care of the underdog" (27) – in front of some women he wants to impress (cf. 27)

Jas is quite eager to renounce his name as well as his former way of speaking, behaving and dressing as he suffers from an inferiority complex. He is ashamed of his family name and whiteness as well as of his family's middle-class status.[444] Jas displays hatred of people the rudeboys call "coconuts" – because of their brown skin and alleged "white" behaviour that the boys see in education, standard English and employment. "Coconuts" are accused of "pretendin like they were gora so no one treat'd dem like dey'd just got off da boat from Bombay, innit. But all da gora fuck wid dem anyway." (23) Jas joins in criticising "coconuts" when this is exactly what he is doing himself, i.e. pretending he was a desi rudeboy so nobody would "fuck" with him. Jas accuses them of having made a wrong choice – again, an emphasis on performance and selection through the word choice – as "In't no desi needin to kiss the white man's butt these days an you definitely don't need to actually act like a gora." (23)

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[443] Gunning, Dave. "Ethnicity Politics." *Racism, Slavery, and Literature*. Zach, Wolfgang and Ulrich Pallua (eds). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010. 52.

[444] "Me, I had one a them extra long surnames that nobody'd ever pronounce proply. [...] Matter a fact I int't even gonna tell it to you it's so fucking shameful." (24)

In Jas' case, the direction of the exchange process remains one-way. It is not a reciprocal exchange, but an act of assimilation. What is special about it is that the transfer occurs in the opposite direction to what many readers might expect (e.g. because the public discourse on assimilation usually works along the lines of an assimilation of the non-white party). Interestingly, Arun's parents display a fear of "Westernization" of their sons through Jas (cf. 242) – but then again what they call Westernization is rather their fear that their sons might start to question the parents' authority.

Jas goes about his assimilation by formulating rules. While it is Jas who formulates them, they are based on Hardjit's claims and commands. The rudeboy rules should help Jas to improve his performance.[445] Some of the most important rules cover how to speak (cf. 45, e.g. use "proper words"), "know when 2 shut yo mouth" (in other words obey or at least not question Hardjit) and how (not) to dress (cf. 60).[446] Hardjit even adds one rule out-of-band: "you in't allowed to fantasise outside your own race" (53). This one is not only a dating rule, but also demands that the boys control their imagination.

At first glance, Jas is represented as being successful in his assimilation and performance, e.g. by the gestures of the other members (cf. 44) and the fact that they call him "bruv" (cf. 28). In schoolfellow Andy's eyes Jas is in fact a desi rudeboy (146ff.) and even Samira calls him a desi rudeboy (without meaning it as a compliment) (cf. 290f.). In his own eyes, however, Jas only rarely manages to 'get it right'. Constantly there are reminders that it remains a performance which is often alien to Jas' socialisation. Many instances reflect how Jas is trying hard to comply with the rules and display "proper" rudeboy behaviour, style or language.[447]

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[445] There are also some rules for desi girls. They include to be pretty, respect your elders, and learn how to cook (cf. 64). Thus, girls and women are categorised by the male desis as either whore or saint (cf. 53f.).

[446] The other rules cover the right to get the best mobile phone from your parents (cf. 41), to learn how to tell good lies (cf. 39) and throw complicated words at parents (121) or Panjabi slang (69) at 'goras' to keep things secret. Rule 3 is to never get caught (cf. 42) and rule 7, which is subtitled "Bollywood for Beginners", demands the defence of "fit ladies" (61). Two rules are explicitly invented by Jas: to keep looking at other women in case you get dumped (224f.) – a rule Hardjit would not come up with because he would not expect to get dumped – and "If you're gonna get the shit kicked out of you, make sure you pass out." (327)

[447] Jas suppresses e.g. his associations with *The Lord of the Flies* (9) as mentioning a book would harm his reputation. He keeps evaluating his utterances and the others' reactions to check whether he needs to adjust. He often feels the pressure to comply (cf. 46) and comments on some cases in which he knows that his behaviour is not compliant enough, e.g.: "I know I should say bitches stead a women to keep things proper but I'm still working on it." (57) So his performance remains conscious, laborious and selective.

Even if Jas does not feel completely successful, the contrast between accounts of Jas as a desi rudeboy and stories from the time before he joined Hardjit's crew shed light on how Jas has changed. Among these changes are linguistic differences[448], a different clothing style[449], a change in music taste[450] and a displayed disinterest in school. However, Jas has to try hard to control his thoughts and remind himself not to care e.g. about school while he secretly still enjoys some of the classes, as he admits to the reader. The appropriation of his new identity comes with the suppression of his former behaviour and thoughts.

In any case, Jas does not take over everything. He is not as homophobic and misogynist as the others – he states that he remembers from school that it is morally wrong –, he cannot get himself to use some of the 'proper' terms and also rejects Hardjit's dating rules. However, Jas is still complicit in many cases as he does not protest or refuse to comply openly. He only violates Hardjit's rule about only dating women from "your own race" (53) because Jas benefits from this breach directly. So Jas objects against Hardjit's order (cf. 50ff. and 145f.), and when he does not get anywhere by talking, he secretly dates Samira Ahmed.[451]

In the case of language, Jas e.g. makes fun of words such as crib and yard (45f.) to talk about home. Yet rule number four demands the use of "proper words" (45) and he is scared that he might suffer (verbal) abuse otherwise: "If I don't speak proply using the proper words then these guys'd say I was acting like a batty boy or a woman or a woman acting like a batty boy." (46) What distinguishes Jas from the rest of the gang is that Jas is able to switch codes, which is an advantage from which the whole group benefits.[452]

Furthermore, Jas violates the unwritten rule of not interfering with the others' families. Jas gets accused of not respecting desi family values when he meddles with Arun's "family-related shit" (233). Jas mainly argues that the problems Arun and

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[448] For example he loses his stammer (cf. 29) and starts using the rudeboys' slang.
[449] Cf. e.g. 200.
[450] Before joining the gang Jas listened to REM, Britpop (59) and Oasis (145), now he listens to Hip Hop and bhangra music (but not the BBC-Asian-Network kind, as Jas carefully points out (cf. 233)).
[451] Andy, a former school friend of Jas' has discovered that he had good chances at dating desi girls because the fact that their parents and brothers often opposed such a relationship turned Andy into an "irresistible forbidden fruit" (148) (cf. also 145 and 148).
[452] Michael Mitchell says about the gang's language: "their speech is not chosen freely but has become a rigid code. The narrator can use codeswitching or ironic distance to show that he is not entirely confined with the code, but he cannot change or influence it without sacrificing his credibility within the role" (Mitchell 2008: 333f.). However, Jas' ability to speak Standard English got them back into the conversation with Mr Ashwood (cf. 130) and finally got them the gym membership they wanted but were almost exempted from because of Hardjit's inappropriate way of talking to the manager (cf. 187).

Reena experience are based on outdated traditions and that castes are constructed categories and "don't exist" (239). He also says that traditions can be wrong and outdated (cf. 92 and 239) or just "a lame excuse for not havin a proper reason" (237). Jas encourages Arun to rebel against the traditions that demand the submission of Reena's family on the ground that women are "redundant" and "underperforming asset[s]" (80f.).[453]

These violations of the more or less written and unwritten rules lead to Jas' expulsion from the group. In the end, after the beating, Jas does not change his performance back to what it was before he joined the desi rudeboys, but seems to remain in his desi (rudeboy) role, attempting to impress the nurse by saying 'thank you' in Panjabi (cf. 342).

4.3.4. Concluding Remarks

Londonstani takes up some threads of discussions in contemporary Britain on authenticity and assimilation, but turns some of the aspects on their heads. What is particularly interesting about this representation of cultural exchange is that the assimilation does not work in the usual direction. The novel mirrors parts of the authenticity debate and questions our understanding of categories such as desi subculture. This works on the level of the characters who are negotiating their identities as well as on the communication level including the reader, who is led astray and forced to question her or his conceptions and prejudice as well. In addition, ethnicity is not as important for the group's or subculture's identity as it is often voiced in public discourse. In fact, ethnicity issues fall behind consumer choices and teenage masculinity issues.

In the end, the novel argues that there are no essential categories, but only performance and mixing and matching, i.e. cultural exchange processes. The novel comments that those performances, however, are only temporal and thus can also only be temporarily successful. Jas is confronted with this observation when the conditions change: the members of the desi gang decide about the characteristics of their group identity and in the end Jas' performance is no longer accepted by the others. Thus, his cultural exchange attempts are not successful.

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[453] Jas argues that Reena is a surgeon (cf. 181) and that these traditions cannot or should not be applied to her case. And Jas asks Arun to "Be a man" and ignore the tradition because otherwise "nothin'd ever get better [...] nothin'd ever change. There'd be no equal rights for men an women" (237).

What is particularly interesting about the form of the novel is the twist at the end when Jas is exposed as Caucasian and as unreliable narrator. In addition, the contrast established between Jas' performance and his feelings via the narrative transmission is particularly interesting – and the representation of a white character who attempts to assimilate to a subculture dominated by British Asians is still unusual in the contemporary literary field. Another exceptional formal feature is the construction of a subculture with very distinct rules and speech patterns in which the reader is immersed. However, the narration and form sometimes lose out to the content, in particular towards the end of the novel. Notably the showdown in the hospital that culminates in an almost text-book description of hypermasculinity makes it sound more like a sociology paper than a novel. In addition, the novel at times lacks subtlety: a major part of the information is spelled out and repeated.[454]

Ruvani Ranasinha, when comparing *Londonstani* to *My Beautiful Launderette*, concludes that "ultimately Malkani's fictionalized account of the phenomenon of the Asian Gang does not move beyond parody, and it is Kureishi's early film [...] that still speaks more powerfully because it imagines and visualizes masculinities in ways that imply a challenge to racial and gender hierarchies."[455]

Two opinions dominate the reception side. One describes *Londonstani* as a "sad story" of marketing gone wrong. Proponents of the other opinion suspect that the novel was not as successful as expected – the expectations ran along the lines of *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane* – because it was more difficult to identify with the characters[456] and because the novel challenged "the liberal proponents of multiculturalism […] rather than reinforcing their ideological preconceptions."[457] Ruvani Ranasinha, for example, believes that the characters' lack of depth made identification with them so difficult[458]. I believe, however, that the majority of the

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[454] In particular when it comes to Jas' motivation to comply with the desi rudeboy rules, the distribution of information is quite explicit. In addition, in the last part, when Jas goes off to rob the phones and feels persecuted by three men who all look like Samira's brothers, Sanjay's gang or Hardjit, Ravi and Amit the text is repetitive and not very subtle.
[455] Ranasinha 2009: 303.
[456] Cf. ibid.: 302.
[457] Graham 2008. Graham states: "Despite the endorsements of reasonably high profile black-British figures, proclaiming the book's fidelity to contemporary black urban youth culture, the novel represents a kind of caricatured globalised blackness that simply is not to the taste of the majority of consumers of multicultural fiction. In this way *Londonstani* challenges the liberal proponents of multiculturalism – be they politicians, publishers or the implied audience of their 'multicultural novel' – rather than reinforcing their ideological preconceptions." (ibid.) What most of the secondary sources on *Londonstani* share is their plot-orientation and their interest in the content of the novel. Observations related to the genre, the narrative transmission or other aesthetic means are rarely found.
[458] Cf. Ranasinha 2009: 302.

British readers were just not that interested in a story about struggling teenagers and their macho subculture, probably because a lot of the characters' behaviour is so annoying. In addition, *Londonstani* neither meets the expectations of a reader looking for an easy read nor the aesthetic pleasure of works such as *Maps for Lost Lovers*.

In my opinion, the take on the authenticity debate and the fact that it provides an unusual narrative about appropriation and assimilation as well as the fact that *Londonstani* received a lot of attention in the literary field and thus contributed to many debates, are sufficient justification to have a closer look at the novel despite some of its weaknesses in terms of aesthetic representation and narrative strategies. For quite different reasons, Maggie Gee's *The White Family*, the last novel to be analysed in this thesis, also had an ambivalent role to play in terms of its position in and impact on the literary field.

4.4. Maggie Gee's *The White Family*: No Happy Multicultural Land, or: A Case of Failed Cultural Exchange

4.4.1. Plot and Author

The Plot

The White Family revolves around a family called White who lives in Hillesden Rise in London. This is probably a reference to Willesden in North West London. Alfred, the head of the family, is the keeper of Albion Park, a Victorian park in the neighbourhood. After starting an unnecessary fight with a black family who had walked on the grass, Alfred has a stroke. The Whites reunite at his bed-side in hospital: Alfred's wife May and their three children Darren, Shirley and Dirk.

This brings to light stories from the past as well as some conflicts between the family members. While Shirley's reaction to her father's authoritarian rule and his racist and conservative attitudes is rebellion – she only dates black men, leaves the family after they make her give up her daughter for adoption and marries a Ghanaian academic – her older brother and model-son Darren literally flees to start a new life in the USA. The youngest son, Dirk, stays with his mother and father and uncritically repeats his father's xenophobic prejudice. It is Dirk who in the end murders a young black student in Albion Park, a reference to the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. While May tries to play it down and appeals to Alfred's loyalty to his family (cf. 326), Alfred reports his son to the police because he believes that "in the end, there's right and wrong" (332).

Racism is one central conflict in this novel, straight-forward forms as well as hidden and institutionalised racism. However, the reader is not only confronted with discrimination from white characters against their black compatriots, but also with racial stereotypes originating from Afro-Caribbean and Ghanaian characters.

Every chapter of the novel is told from a different perspective and by one of the members of the White family or by Thomas, a childhood family friend who now works in the local library. Other important characters are Kojo Asante, Elroy and Winston King. Kojo is Shirley's first husband, a Ghanaian academic who has a PhD in comparative literature and teaches at a London university. Kojo dies of cancer. Elroy King is Shirley's current partner. Elroy was born and raised in London, but because his parents emigrated to the UK from Jamaica he is often discriminated against and seen as a foreigner. Winston is Elroy's little brother. He suffers from double discrimination because he is black and homosexual, and his sexual orientation

is stigmatised in his British Afro-Caribbean community and family. Winston is the student who gets killed by Dirk.

The Author: Maggie Gee

Maggie Gee was born in Dorset and lives in London. She is an established writer in the literary field in the UK. She was elected one of the twenty 'Best of Young British Novelists' in 1983, together with Martin Amis, Pat Barker, Julian Barnes, Ursula Bentley, William Boyd, Buchi Emecheta, Kazuo Ishiguro, Alan Judd, Adam Mars-Jones, Ian McEwan, Shiva Naipaul, Philip Norman, Christopher Priest, Salman Rushdie, Lisa St. Aubin de Terán, Clive Sinclair, Graham Swift, Rose Tremain and A. N. Wilson.[459] She has published many critically acclaimed novels and was a judge of the Booker Prize in 1989.[460]

Maggie Gee has written ten novels so far, and her memoirs *My Animal Life* were published in 2010. *The White Family* was the sixth novel she wrote, but it was published much later (as her eighth novel in 2002), because in 1995, publishers were reluctant to publish a novel on the difficult topic of racism which she treats from a new perspective. Maggie Gee enjoys a high reputation in the literary field for writing rather complex texts and being technically innovative. Her novels have been translated into many languages. She has been on the editorial board of the journal *Wasafiri* since 2004 and also fills many other posts, such as Fellow and Vice-President of the Royal Society of Literature, where she was the first female Chair of Council (2004-2008). She is a member of the Society of Authors' Committee of Management and a member of the government Public Lending Right Committee, and she teaches Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University.[461]

Maggie Gee is also politically active and involved in projects to save libraries.[462] She was awarded an OBE for services to literature in 2012.[463]

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[459] Cf. Buford, Bill (ed.). *Granta 7: Best Young British Novelists*. London: Penguin, 1983.
[460] "Who is Who in the Man Booker Prize." *The Booker Prize Foundation*. http://www.themanbookerprize.com/timeline (accessed 30 September 2013).
[461] Cf. "Maggie Gee." *British Council*. http://literature.britishcouncil.org/maggie-gee (accessed 30 September 2013).
[462] "News." *Telegram Books*. 30 August 2012. http://www.telegrambooks.com/archives/telegram/telegram_news/ (accessed 4 November 2012).
[463] Cf. "Maggie Gee." *British Council*. http://literature.britishcouncil.org/maggie-gee (accessed 30 September 2013).

4.4.2. History of Publication and Reception

Maggie Gee explains that she wrote the novel in the wake of Stephen Lawrence's murder at a bus stop in London in 1993. She wanted to find answers to the question how such a murder could have happened:

> What kind of country, what kind of family, might produce racists like the five white thugs [who killed Stephen Lawrence, S.v.L.]? This was what I needed to write about. What did it say about my city? For I had become a Londoner, and Stephen Lawrence was one of our own. But so were the thugs, the murderers.[464]

The White Family is thus a novel that explores the roots and results of stereotypes and racism, not only in uneducated communities, but rather in white middle-class families as well as immigrant communities. Publishers in the UK, however, were not interested in Maggie Gee's answers: even as an acclaimed writer, she desperately tried to have her sixth novel published first by her usual and then by other mainstream publishers, but nobody wanted to publish this difficult text. The rejection letters Maggie Gee received indicate that the topic of white racism was deemed to be too difficult for a number of mainstream publishers. Maggie Gee writes about their answers in her memoirs *My Animal Life* (2010):

> The rejection letters were curious. Too long, too insulting or self-justifying, some just inappropriate: one editor remarked that she 'simply disagreed', though generally you don't disagree with a novel. Many of them used the same adjectives; 'dark' was a favourite, which should have been amusing.[465]

While Maggie Gee believes that a combination of different factors led to the rejections, she suspects that the main reason was the difficult topic: "I come to this conclusion: the novel was turned down partly, perhaps mainly, because the subject was unacceptable. Britain didn't want to think about racism. It wasn't ready, though one day it would be. In 1995, publishers turned their backs."[466]

After seven years Maggie Gee found a publisher willing to produce her novel: Saqi Books. This small independent publisher (and bookshop) actually specializes on non-fiction about the Middle East and Balkan regions, but felt that her novel was worth publishing. They launched an imprint for fiction in 2005, Telegram Books, and in the aftermath Maggie Gee has published all her novels and her memoir with Telegram. Saqi was proven right about the potential of *The White Family*. It was well received by readers and critics alike. It was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for

[464] Gee, Maggie. *My Animal Life*. London: Telegram, 2010. 175.
[465] Gee 2010: 180.
[466] Ibid.

Fiction in 2002 and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2004. The sales numbers, however, are much lower than the ones for *Brick Lane* (857,651) and *Maps for Lost Lovers* (45,280): by December 2012, *The White Family* had sold 12,898 copies.[467]

Reviews praised Maggie Gee's courage to address such a difficult topic. Maya Jaggi wrote in *The Guardian* that *The White Family* was an "audacious, groundbreaking condition-of-England novel that delves for the roots of xenophobic hatred and violence in the English hearth."[468] Jaggi also emphasizes that only very few contemporary novels represent and explore racism in Britain in detail. "The White Family is finely judged and compulsively readable. Its head-on scrutiny of the uglier face of fair Albion is the more impressive for its rarity in British fiction."[469] Both reviews in *The Guardian* and *The Times Literary Supplement* also comment on the way Maggie Gee refrains from blatant condemnation; instead she "moves skilfully between compassion and disgust".[470] I think this is an important observation. Maggie Gee's empathic characterisations prevent the novel from being an oversimplified attack on white racists. I agree with Heather Clark's assessment in *The Times Literary Supplement* that the novel was "not a little disturbing."[471] There are a lot of passages that I experienced as disturbing and quite difficult to read, such as Dirk's inner perspective. In addition, what the reviews overlook – or at least what they do not mention explicitly – is that racist thoughts and behaviour are not exclusive to the white characters in the novel.

4.4.3. Analysis of the Representation of Cultural Exchange

4.4.3.1. Time and Space: Social Contexts

The representations of space and time place the novel in a particular social and historical context. *The White Family* is set in a former working-class area in London, called Hillesden Rise. Some geographic references indicate that it is modelled after Brent in North West London. While some parts of the area have changed through gentrification, others appear to have stagnated or even declined in the past 30 years. The majority of the population is white working-class or former working-class. The

[467] Cf. appendix.
[468] Jaggi, Maya. "Too Close to Home." *The Guardian* 25 May 2002. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/may/25/fiction.orangeprizeforfiction2002 (accessed 30 September 2013).
[469] Ibid.
[470] Clark, Heather. "Empire on the Doorstep." *The Times Literary Supplement* 3 May 2002. 23.
[471] Ibid.

generation of the adult children represented e.g. through Shirley, Darren and Thomas is upwardly mobile. Some immigrants from the Indian Subcontinent, the West Indies and African countries as well as their descendants live in Hillesden as well and mostly work in service positions. However, these immigrants and their families still form a minority. The main part of the novel is set in 1997 or 1998[472].

The White Family refers to Stephen Lawrence's murder.[473] Stephen Lawrence was a black British teenager who was murdered by racists at a bus stop in London in 1993. The police, however, released the suspects after a half-hearted investigation.[474] An inquiry ordered by Home Secretary Jack Straw, the so-called Macpherson report, accused the Metropolitan police of "institutional racism"[475] and made recommendations to improve the work of the police. The BBC calls the report a "key moment in the modern history of criminal justice in Britain"[476] – and Stephen Lawrence's case became part of British collective memory[477]. With Dirk White murdering Winston King, Maggie Gee's novel mirrors the murder of Stephen Lawrence. And with the many perspectives of and on the White family, Maggie Gee investigates and experiments with possible reasons and contexts of such a murder.

While the main part of the action is set in the late 1990s, some flashbacks take the reader back to the 1930s and post-war London as well as to the 1960s, when Shirley and Dirk were children. The first category of flashbacks consists of Alfred's memories before and after the war. The juxtaposition of these memories and the

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[472] This can be deduced from information about Alfred's age when he met May in 1943 and his age during the period most of the novel is set, if Alfred's memories are correct (cf. 177 and 200). The page numbers in this thesis refer to the edition published by Saqi in 2002: Gee, Maggie. *The White Family*. London: Saqi, 2002. In this following, the title *The White Family* is abbreviated to *TWF*.

[473] Cf. Gee 2010: 175.

[474] In 2012, two of the murderers received lifelong sentences. For more details on the different stages of the investigation, see the *Guardian* site "Stephen Lawrence." http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/lawrence (accessed 11 November 2012).

[475] This is the definition of "institutional racism" given in the Macpherson Report: "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." (Macpherson, W. *The Stephen Lawrence inquiry: report of an inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny* (Cm 4262-I). London: HMSO, 1999. Paragraph 6.34.)

[476] "Stephen Lawrence Pair Face Murder Trial." *BBC News* 18 May 2011. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-13438629 (accessed 18 May 2011).
However, Rob Berkeley, a *Guardian* journalist and the director of the Runnymede Trust, claims: "Black people are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white people." (Berkeley, Rob. "Race has Dropped Off the Agenda." *The Guardian* 2 November 2012. http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/nov/02/racial-equality-bad-old-days?INTCMP=SRCH (accessed 19 November 2012).)

[477] Cf. e.g. Muir, Hugh. "The Stephen Lawrence Case: How it Changed Britain." *The Guardian* 3 January 2012. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jan/03/how-stephen-lawrence-changed-britain (accessed 11 November 2012).

representation of the same area in the 1990s reveal (cultural) change, such as changed demographics and a change in social status for some inhabitants, albeit filtered through Alfred's perspective. Some of Alfred's memories are about his military service in Palestine. In these passages Alfred remembers the feeling of not being welcome in a country and he is reminded of his fascination with strong-willed Arabic pilgrims (cf. 329). However, neither the fascination nor these insights ever lead to any attempt at cultural exchange on Alfred's part.

The second category of flashbacks is the account of the White children's childhood in the 1960s in London, which is conveyed through Shirley's and May's recollections. These passages provide additional information about the relations between the family members, explain why the family is so dysfunctional and to some extent why Dirk is the way he is, i.e. a self-loathing racist and misogynist.

The post-war period is also the time of arrival for many migrants. Sophie King, for example, is a representative of the Windrush generation (cf. 304). Sophie King and her husband came from Jamaica and came to the UK after World War II with great expectations, along with many other West Indians who had served the UK in the war and now wanted to go to the "mother country". However, their hopes were disappointed: Sophie came to the UK to be a nurse and became a cleaner, possibly because of racist discrimination. The narrator comments that "Britain hadn't given her what it had promised" (306). Sophie's story is a reference to similar stories of disappointment and discrimination, in real life as well as in other literary representations, e.g. Samuel Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004), to name one of the first and a more recent example.

Migration to England is not represented as a pleasant experience, and the myth of the mother country welcoming its children with open arms is once more dismantled. The impact of the hard time the British gave immigrants from the former Empire after WWII is represented through Sophie King and her family. In addition, the present situation is not represented as much better, even though fifty years have passed and even though in contrast to such fictional accounts, public discourse in the UK often emphasises how much has been improved, e.g. in terms of antidiscrimination laws. However, the reader learns throughout the novel that changing the laws is not enough in order to change attitudes. While migration does not necessarily lead to intercultural contact and cultural exchange, the context of migration invites an investigation of the representation of contact zones in the novel.

4.4.3.2. Contact Zones

Public spaces are one main category of contact zones in the novel. The Whites – with the exception of Shirley – as well as the Kings mainly move in circles of their own class and ethnicity, but in public spaces and institutions they meet people from other backgrounds. Furthermore, the family in itself can function as a contact zone: provided there is a mediator, family constellations allow characters from different class-cultures or ethnicities to meet. I will analyse the representations of the following contact zones as well as their potential in leading to cultural (ex)change: the family, Albion park, the streets of Hillesden Rise, the library, the church and the school.

The Family

The family has the potential to serve as a contact zone. The family constellation could enable cultural exchanges because the family ties connect these rather different characters and conflicting perspectives. This potential to bring diverging generations, classes, ethnicities and value systems together is partly diminished, however, because Darren and Shirley have left the family. Darren lives in the USA, and Shirley avoids her parents. However, because of Alfred's stroke, these very different people meet after a long time of not seeing each other when they are reunited at Alfred's bedside. As this is the first meeting in a long time, memories and unresolved conflicts from the past are added to the already charged juxtaposition of antithetical characters.

The family serves as contact zone for different generations and classes. May and Alfred are rooted in working-class culture, Darren and Shirley are upwardly mobile and express this through lifestyle choices and their language.[478] Because of past conflicts, however, there is not much exchange between family members. Darren and Shirley rather attempt to reject everything they associate with their parents' class, among other things Alfred's violent outbursts and May's preoccupation about what the neighbours might think when Shirley has a daughter out of wedlock which led to May forcing Shirley to give up her daughter for adoption.

The most important area in which the family functions as a contact zone is the opportunity to bring together black and white characters who otherwise only move in ethnically homogeneous circles. Shirley in particular acts as a mediator. If the

[478] Contrary to Darren and Shirley, Alfred's language reveals working-class markers, such as "my duck" when talking to his wife and children (e.g. 59, 271, 279).

exchange had been successful, both sides, e.g. Kojo and Dirk, could then have acknowledged their preconceptions about the respective other as stereotypes and could have embraced the 'other side' as a different but equal member of the society they live in. While the mediation between Kojo and Dirk is a success, the effect is only short-term. While Dirk finally embraces Kojo, this is not a proof that he has changed his racist way of thinking. This is revealed when he rejects Elroy. May reflects with resignation:

> [...] to May's astonishment they started again, Dirk and his father, as if they'd learned nothing. 'Kojo was different,' Dirk insisted. 'Kojo wasn't like the others.' [...] And that was that. May tried to make sense of it. People kept things in their brains in tight little boxes ... Because Dirk liked Kojo, Kojo stopped being black. But her son still hated all the other coloured people. (63)

So the actual (ex)changes in the White family are limited.

One instance of successful mediation and cultural exchange happens rather in the background: Mario, the owner of a café in Hillesden, came from Italy, fell in love with an English woman and decided to stay in England: "He fell in love with an English girl and got stuck here long ago. Actually, he couldn't be more English" (168). It is noteworthy that the cases of successful exchange and mediation are mostly linked to love relationships: Shirley and Kojo, Shirley and Elroy, Mario and his wife and the mixed couples at church.

The Park

Albion Park is a central setting that functions as a contact zone for people from different ethnicities who live in the area as well as a meeting point for homosexuals in search of secret and anonymous sex. As a public space, the park is theoretically to be enjoyed by everyone, but black visitors feel discriminated against – which they are indeed by Alfred. The novel opens with a dispute: Alfred refuses to listen to the family whose children walked on the grass in search of a lost toy plane. "'This Park belongs to everyone,' the black man informs him. 'That's just it!' Now Alfred perks up. 'Same rules for everyone, as well. I'm just asking you lot to get off the grass.'" (11) Even if one leaves Alfred's utterance "you lot" out, it becomes apparent that this conversation takes place in a conflict-laden context, a context of discrimination against black visitors. The situation cannot be resolved. In fact, the black family leaves the park although they could have stayed.

The park is closely connected to Alfred, who has spent most of his life as its park keeper. In various cases, Alfred refers to the good old times of Imperial and then post-war Britain, remembers wistfully their old uniforms and social standing through the job as park keeper, a status that does not exist as such any more. This is just one indicator of change – of Alfred's as well as of the park's role.

The name Albion Park suggests an interpretation of the park as metaphor for England. Albion is an old and rather poetic name for the British Isles, in particular England. This metaphor for England is used in literary as well as in political contexts. Some people claim that this name derives from the Latin word for "white", *albus*, and refers to the cliffs of Dover.[479] The colour is yet another link to Alfred White.

If the park is a metaphor for Britain, what image of Britain is painted and by whom? The name of the park, Albion Park, as well as its description as a Victorian park evokes a romantically idealised past version of England, at least through Alfred's perspective. Alfred sees the park as a fort he has to hold (cf. 181). He perceives his job as a service to the public, but also finds the visitors maddening (cf. 182). He idealises what the park used to be and observes with concern that there is not enough funding to return the park to its former glories with live music and such (cf. 43). Instead, there are people stealing flowers, having homosexual intercourse in the lavatories and using the park for gang fights at night. The narrator reveals: "In Alfred's mind, the park had gone dark." (276) Thomas, however, has a different perspective. He appreciates the beauty of the public space and its contrast to the grey areas that surround it (cf. 39-44): "In dirty Hillesden, the Park seemed miraculous. Just past the noticeboards, life came back." (39)

The scenes in the park do not reveal substantial intercultural contact in the park; the visitors just use the same space but are not connected to each other. This is another parallel to the society described in the novel. The only visible exchanges are the acts of sexual intercourse. The black family, the homosexuals, some scattered strollers, Alfred – they all use the park but without being connected to one another.

There are, however, cultural exchange processes in the park in relation to animals and plants. Alfred, the park keeper, likes to argue that it is not natural to have foreign animals in the park – and implicitly draws a parallel to foreigners living in his part of town or even England. Thomas, on the other hand, observes that the

[479] Cf. "Albion." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/13017/Albion (accessed 20 November 2012).

"foreign birds" (40) they imported do very well and add to the beauty of the park (cf. 39). Some more examples of transferred animals and plants are the koi carp and bonsai trees. Alfred appears not to see former imported elements in the park as a foreign influence any more but as part of the park. The image of growing roots might be associated with this and thus another parallel between the park and the country. Through growing roots, the trees and the immigrants can become a constitutive element of the respective context.

The park that was established in Victorian times and whose name evokes a comparison with England has changed over time. It has not changed as fast as the community of the area though. Alfred's loss of status, Britain's loss of the Empire and the park's loss of significance are somehow connected – and imply that it is necessary to adapt to changes and remain open and flexible to prevent isolation and decline. Social conventions have changed since the Victorian era, old ideals have become outdated, but the park still represents some of the old ways. If one returns to the park being a metaphor for England, it is a comment that England has not changed enough to be attractive to its new and more diverse inhabitants. Instead of thinking about how the park could be made more attractive to visitors, e.g. by allowing children to play on the grass and thus attracting more (diverse) families from the area, Alfred enforces outdated rules. If the park is a metaphor for England, it can be read as a (missed) opportunity to find a convivial way to share public spaces and engage in change together.

The Streets of Hillesden

Another important contact zone is the area of Hillesden Rise. It is a rather small community where people still meet on the streets. Here is how May White experiences the area:

> There was a Sushi bar – imagine it! – with narrow windows and queer blue light. And a girl peering out had half-moon eyes, but the boy she was with was *very* black. There were three Indian restaurants [...] There were shops advertising 'Cheap International Phone Calls', and another one selling those uncomfortable beds with wooden bases and thin flat mattresses. But *lovely colours*: bright blue, bright green, and as life and hope ran through May's veins she thought, If only Alfred was here [...] Hillesden isn't dying. It's coming up." (145, emphasis added, S.v.L.)

People from outside the UK have settled in Hillesden and changed the face of the area. When May walks through the parts where only white English people are living,

everything seems grey and hopeless, whereas in the parts where immigration has led to change, things are colourful and alive. However, the change does not appear to be solely a matter of changed demographics, e.g. more diverse and international inhabitants, but also a matter of investment, capitalism and gentrification. The negative effects of the area's market orientation is that the hospital had "gone downhill ever since it had become a trust" (135), people have to go to "Gigamart" to buy meat because the butchers went out of business and the bakery does not bake bread anymore but delivers it over from Kilburn (cf. May 98, 100). What is left? "Betting and boozing, as other things dwindled. Till all that was left would be the pub and the betting shop. Nowhere for people like May to go." (99) This observation prior to May's visit of the nicer area mentioned above leads her to cry out: "[i]t was over. Hillesden Rise was over, over, and May found the tears welling up again." (100) On the other side, globalization and capitalism also brought new investors to the area and started a process of gentrification. Again, this can be seen from various perspectives, the two obvious effects are that the area becomes more expensive but also nicer and livelier: "Hillesden isn't dying. It's coming up" (145). One can see that the new gap is not primarily running along ethnic lines but rather mirroring the pay gap. Class differences lie at the heart of the divide. The result may be similar to a divide by ethnicity because employees from ethnic minorities earn less, or might be discriminated against and not get the same jobs as the whites. In the novel teachers are white (cf. 314) and nurses predominantly black (cf. 274). In this particular area, however, the ethnic or national divide is not necessarily always related to income. Many international or mixed ethnic people have started their own businesses such as the Patel's newspaper agencies.

This part of town has become an area frequented by people from a variety of ethnic origins. It is on the streets of Hillesden that Alfred learns through contact with some black teenagers that his fears of black people are unfounded. While he is scared at first and prepares himself to fight them (a scene in which he appears rather ridiculous in his pyjamas and weakened by cancer), he goes through different stages of perception and finally concludes that they are not his enemy (cf. 333-334).

The Library

The public library is a public institution involved in cultural exchange. Its role is ambivalent. While it serves as a contact zone and resource provider, Thomas, the

librarian, shows racist attitudes at times. While a lot was changed by the council to prevent discrimination and to be politically correct, the reader sees through Thomas' perspective that it is not enough to change the words or the inventory. Thomas is still slightly racist and does not even notice it. When he thinks about the fact that the library tries to offer non-English books to their public, Thomas gets angry:

> Books. Words. The English language. I try to serve it. (And other languages. We have to now. Three hundred-odd languages are spoken in London, and people expect us to have books in all of them. Which is fair enough ... Or maybe too fair. Sometimes I feel it's all gone too far. But I'm not allowed to think like that. Librarians are servants to the people.) (28)

Thomas' and Shirley's perspectives and opinions are juxtaposed with regard to racism. Shirley is annoyed by Thomas' attempt to impress her by talking openly about racism and how it is not an issue any more. Shirley often experiences people taking pride in "saying the unsayable" (230), i.e. talking about racism, because they know she has a black boyfriend. Thomas expresses relief about the situation in the UK in comparison to the representation of race relations in the USA, i.e. the film on James Baldwin they both watched. Shirley, on the other hand, remembers how hard it had been for Kojo at times, but she does not want to start to argue with Thomas. However, Thomas feels encouraged and goes on talking about the library:

> At the library [...] nearly half the staff are black. But we all get on. It's just *not an issue*. Apparently the only time we didn't was the eighties, when the council got terribly p.c. and sent two race relation advisors in. Then everyone started to hate each other. Meanwhile these advisors were ruining stock, chucking out books that had the quotes, *wrong message* and spending the earth on [...] [h]undreds of books on racism. But the public doesn't care about things like that. People aren't interested, is the bottom line. (230)

Shirley, however, doubts this. And the reader knows that Winston e.g. does borrow these books. That Thomas gets annoyed about the buying of books on racism, and comments like "nearly half the staff are black. *But* we all get on" (ibid., emphasis added, S.v.L.) characterises him negatively.

This negative characterisation of Thomas as one of the leading staff of the library paints a rather dark picture of the institution. Nevertheless, the library is still able to function as a contact zone for Winston: he can access books in the library that offer him a window to different (sub)cultures, sociological and political approaches as well as a comfort that he cannot encounter in his social surroundings. Through the books in the library he has access to values and other ideas that are different to what

he knows from home. He gains a different understanding of cultural conventions and that they are not universal.

The Church

Another institution relevant to cultural exchange is the church. People from different communities meet there, united through their faith. It is also noteworthy that they are rather homogenous in terms of class and that culture or ethnicity appears less important than denomination and class in the case of Sophie's church (cf. Shirley's perspective: 301, 302). However, there are also other churches that are not described positively: Sophie King, Elroy's mother, was disappointed by the Church of England because it had made her feel unwelcome when she came to Britain after WWII: "A hurt from fifty years ago, never forgotten." (304) One result is that Sophie King is disappointed and retreats into a community which is more similar to what she knew before, i.e. a more "charismatic" church. At Paddington Temple she "felt accepted in this country at last." (304) It is a rather marginalized and multicultural setting, a rather poor area where more migrants and poor whites live.

Shirley experiences rejection at her Catholic church. She feels "without pleasure heads turning" (294) when she and Elroy arrive. She even recalls having been called names and yelled at because of her black partner and reflects that this was only the case in areas where there weren't many non-white inhabitants. Interestingly, she also draws a parallel between class or income, space and racist attitudes: in "the poorer parts of London where mixed relationships were common, the parts of London where black people lived" (ibid.) she is not stared at. At St John's church, she experiences some acceptance, but Shirley discovers it to be shallow:

> Very few black people attended this church. Kojo had liked it partly because, as he said, it was much quieter than black churches; 'I've had too much of the shouting and jerking.' They had attended regularly over the years, and lots of people knew Kojo by name, though she realized how imperfect the friendships were when so many of them greeted Elroy as Kojo. (293)

She even goes further and attributes the acceptance of St John's church to their romanticized way of looking at foreigners, Muslims and non-white people in general (cf. 294). So she accuses them of exoticising 'otherness' and thus being complicit in the discrimination of the respective groups (St John's is located near Picadilly, i.e. a richer area).

Kojo joined Shirley's church and rejected traditional African religions as "nonsense" (107) – a view also held by the former colonial powers. Shirley and Elroy have not found a church where they both felt comfortable, so they take turns every Sunday.

The Pentecostal Temple that Shirley attends with Elroy and their so-called charismatic sermons are a culture shock for Shirley. She feels uncomfortable and perceives it as staged. Reverend Lack – to Shirley a telling name – is a British priest from Kenya with American inflections, and he puts on a show, the church seems more like a theatre. The many monitors appear inappropriate to her. The preacher spreads propaganda and agitation: "There will be a new battle of Britain, brothers and sisters. … We have to be ready to fight … A battle of Britain. And we are his army." (307) It is in this church that Shirley has a horror vision, where the preacher leads everybody to a war and the congregation ends up dead. Sitting through this sermon, Shirley has a sudden association of the priest with Adolf Hitler.

At first glance, Sophie's church makes her feel welcome, has members with multiple cultural backgrounds and appears like a contact zone that encourages cultural exchange. However, this is not the case. In fact, all religious institutions are represented to be more of an obstacle to cultural exchange: St John's because they do not see the person but only the 'exotic' skin colour and make no attempts to engage in personal relationships, and Paddington Temple because they spur the congregation on and make them believe they are at war – whether against non-believers or rich white people is not made explicit.

The School

The school functions as a contact zone for children from different cultural backgrounds. However, due to a lack of public spending the school is quite derelict: "the school did look badly run down, full of makeshift materials that hadn't aged well, yellowing plastic, buckled aluminium, paint in layers like peeling skin" (313); "it's whatever's cheapest." (ibid.) But it is not only the building: Melissa, a teacher at the local school and Thomas' friend, comments that the classes are too big, teachers are exhausted, and richer parents send their children to private schools (cf. 314). In addition to the low public spending for the building and smaller classes, Thomas suspects that the salary is too low: "nearly all women, it must be the pay" (313).

In addition to these observations, the majority of the teachers is white while the majority of the children is not (cf. 313f.). So there is some intercultural contact between the children, but not among the teachers. This also reduces the number of ethnic minority role models for the children.

The one lesson which is depicted in more detail is a class about Ancient Egypt, in particular the role of writing. It is the only class represented, but I believe it is characteristic or noteworthy that it is not a class about black British culture, by which most of the pupils would have been affected, but rather a culture that does not exist anymore. The session can possibly serve as a critique of the curriculum which has not yet been adapted to the changed needs and demographics and is not related to the cultural diversity in the area. This may sound like an unfair critique because it is just this one lesson, but as Maggie Gee chose to present only this one lesson, one might ask what was behind the choice of topic. Another possible and more positive interpretation is that this lesson teaches the children something about the history of writing. It also shows how the origins of this cultural practice have been acquired from abroad via various instances of cultural exchange. In fact, Melissa mediates between her pupils and foreign cultures, and I interpret this as a sign of hope for the future, i.e. children having contact with cultures different from the mainstream British culture and possibly also their parents' culture; this is done with great enthusiasm and conveys the message to the children that different cultures can be interesting and exciting. The school's role for cultural exchange is then to teach children about different cultures and increase their cultural awareness. At the same time, the teachers have a very hard job with too many children per class, financial cuts and not enough resources; this is explicitly mentioned by Melissa and implicitly visible through Thomas' perspective that confronts us with the effects: run-down buildings and exhausted teachers. So the positive effect the school can have is jeopardized. Consequently, the school's function as a contact zone and space for cultural exchange is ambivalent.

4.4.3.3. Characters: Mediators and Obstructors

The most important ethnic groups in Hillesden are Caucasians, West Indians, Central Africans and South Asians (Indians, Pakistani, Bangladeshi). The largest amount of literary space in the novel is occupied by white characters, the White family to be precise. They are Alfred, May, Darren, Shirley and Dirk White, Alfred's friends

George and Ruby Millington, Dirks "friends", Darren's friend Thomas[480] and his neighbour Melissa. The King family is Afro-Caribbean. Sophie has two sons, Winston and Elroy, and two daughters, Delorice and Viola. Kojo and his sisters as well as the reverend from Kenya are of African descent. Among the British Asian or South Asian characters are the library employee Suneeta Patel and her daughter, the shop owner Patel and other, unspecified business men in the area.

In addition to ethnic heritage, class is an important category of the characterisation in the novel. Most of the characters are working-class and struggle financially. The exceptions are Darren, a journalist, the librarian and author Thomas, Shirley, who inherited a substantial sum from Kojo, and Winston who attends university classes and might have attempted to enter an academic career. May and Alfred White both come from working-class families – although May's parents appear to have had a slightly higher status than Alfred's, as is reflected in Alfred's memories about his courtship. Alfred and May try to move up socially but are not very successful. Darren and Shirley are ashamed because of their working-class backgrounds and attempt to dissociate themselves from their parents and move further up the social ladder. They are characterised through signs of middle-class affiliation such as Darren's job as a journalist, his money and credit cards (cf. 22, 29) and Shirley's clothing and her escapist consumerist shopping trips (cf. 112-114). Kojo Asante held a PhD and was wealthy because of his family; they were chiefs in Ghana (cf. 109). Elroy King works, in contrast, for the NHS (cf. 52, 233). Other black characters are mainly to be found in working-class positions, such as the service people in busses, hospitals, museums etc. This constellation and characterisation of characters has the effect that the environment appears limiting for black characters. It creates the impression that only a limited amount of careers is open to black people and thus adds to the characterisation of the environment as being racist.

The characters in *TWF* are mostly round characters, as they are constructed as rather complex characters with more than one dimension. Layers are added in the course of the novel: the characterisation of Alfred e.g. is a case in which additional information forces the reader to reassess the character, from a seemingly one-

[480] Thomas unites quite a large number of ethnic heritages in himself. He has Jewish, Italian, Barbadian, Irish and English roots. However, in contrast to the Kings, his cultural heritage is not as easy to spot because of his white skin colour and his use of Standard English. He is not discriminated against, because he is not visibly 'different'.

dimensional racist and violent character to a more differentiated one. Most attention is given to the Whites and to Thomas. The reader learns about them from various perspectives and is also confronted with the characters' own thoughts and assessments. However, although the characters are rather complex, they do not show many signs of development. In the following, I will show how the characters are introduced and characterised as well as who functions as a mediator for cultural exchange, and who is an obstructor.

Most characters in *TWF* remain ambivalent through their characterisation by the narrator, their own comments, thoughts and behaviour and other characters' assessments. The discrepancies between the different characterisations can have the effect of uncovering things, such as hidden interests. The ambivalence leads to a refusal of easy judgements and forces the reader to question the characters' motivation.

In *TWF*, the family names of the main protagonists encourage certain associations. In the case of the Whites, for example, the colour of their skin resonates every time it is mentioned. This is particularly noteworthy because mostly, the skin colour or ethnicity is only mentioned if it is not white. But in the case of the Whites, it is always present. The King's family name could be a reference to Rodney King, who was beaten up by police in Los Angeles in 1992. This reference establishes a link between the Stephen Lawrence case and the Rodney King case, both of which centred on institutionalised racism. While publication of the video in which Rodney King is beaten by police officer triggered riots in Los Angeles, USA, there are no violent riots at Winston's funeral, but rather signs of solidarity by the black community in London. The police's only comment in *TWF* is that "they had 'no reason to believe' the crime had a racial motive." (322) The police is not represented as racist, but rather as unfriendly and careless towards everybody, e.g. when they almost kill Shirley when they drive by in their police car or when they sneer at Alfred when he arrives at the police station.

Another, this time rather humorous, aspect of names and the characterisation that goes along with it is May's encounter with Winston, whom she asks for his name out of thankfulness (and a bad conscience because she thought he wanted to rob her). When she is puzzled that a black man is called "Winston", he teases her by saying: "Winston [...] that's not a foreigner's name, is it?" (133) May notices that he seems to be embarrassed because of his name and thinks:

> *Maybe kids never like the names we give them.* 'No,' she said, so as not to be rude, but inside she reflected that it was. No English people called their sons Winston, though Winnie himself was English, of course. It was only Americans, and blacks. Why were they more patriotic than us? (133)

In the above mentioned case, May's system of categorizing English and non-English names and people clashes with the 'reality' that a black man can be called Winston. In fact, Winston is British, born in London, but because of his black skin colour he is often thought to be a foreigner by other characters, e.g. May and Thomas. May's first association with the name Winston is somebody she knows – Winston Churchill might have come to her mind, too – and her second observation is that many black people in Britain name their children with these rather old-fashioned English names. She does not give an explanation, but a possible interpretation is that those parents wanted to guard their children from discrimination because of their 'foreign sounding' names. This could be an example of cultural transfer for political reasons, i.e. to assimilate to a certain extent and spare children some discrimination. A different interpretation is suggested by Kojo and Shirley. In a reference to the slave trade, Shirley mentions that West Indians have English sounding names because of acts of forced renaming (cf. 108).

Through the characterisation of the characters and their relation to each other in *TWF*, the readers can spot which characters can function as mediators for cultural transfer or exchange. Mediators are so important because the lack of mediators has extensive consequences, such as rendering cultural exchange difficult or even impossible. There are not that many mediators in *TWF*, and there is not that much face-to-face intercultural contact. Shirley, Kojo and Elroy are the most important mediators – they are the only protagonists who actually have contact with members of different cultures and engage in exchange. The few mediators we can find, though, are biased themselves, as is shown by the case of Kojo who is from Ghana and who passes on his prejudice to Shirley. She believes everything uncritically. She states:

> Elroy's family is Jamaican, though he was born in south London. That's partly why Elroy is jealous of Kojo, because he was African, and so highly educated. West Indians don't like Africans much and I always think it's jealousy. Africans have their own names, after all. West Indians don't. White people stole them. I felt so ashamed when Kojo told me West Indian names are all slave names. Slave owners stamping their names for ever ... and then there are the African's who don't like West Indians, 'slave babies'. The worst insult. (108)

Shirley presents this as if it were a fact. But in fact, Elroy seems to be jealous because Kojo was richer and had a university degree, whereas Elroy and his family never managed to move up the social ladder and often feel discriminated against. The reader receives no hint that his unease about Kojo has anything to do with their cultural heritage, but rather class issues. Shirley, however, has adopted her late husband's stereotypes against West Indian people uncritically. This mediated cultural transfer process leaves an 'aftertaste' of biased mediators passing on cultural practices and values but also stereotypes.

Shirley wants to please Kojo's family and attempts to adapt to their conventions. In the end, however, her attempts are limited to food and financial support. Kojo's family never accepted her as his wife. They call her "*obroni*", meaning white person, in an insulting, condescending way (110). Shirley defends them nevertheless: "I knew that most of them had never accepted that I was his wife, though it was nothing personal, indeed they were warm and friendly to me, they were simply waiting for Kojo to come home and take his legitimate Ashanti wife." (109) In order to please them, Shirley learns how to cook Ghanaian dishes to perfection[481] and sends some of the money she inherited from Kojo to his African family. Nevertheless, Shirley remains an outsider to the Asante family. There is only a short period of connection after Kojo's death when they are all united in pain, but this is not permanent.

In one instance, Shirley even realises that she is biased and prejudiced herself, when she thinks derogatively about Arab women: "Arab men's women, she thought, contemptuously, then caught herself thinking it and was ashamed. So she was a bigot like the rest of her family. We all like to think we are better than someone." (71-72). In spite of these implicit and explicit cases of a biased mediator, Shirley can still function as a mediator between her family and Kojo or Elroy respectively.

Unfortunately, this is not always successful and does not always last, as exemplified by Dirk's rejection of Elroy (cf. 63). May still uses the word "coloured" and gets angry with Shirley when she thinks that her daughter brought her friend to Alfred's hospital bed: "she almost fainted when she thought she saw Elroy" (57), "...

[481] An interesting observation here is that Kojo at first claims that "Ashanti men may not enter the kitchen" (110), but in the end Shirley learns to cook all those dishes, which means that Kojo has overcome some of his native culture's gender conventions in order to act as a mediator for Shirley. Shirley, in return, can thus show Kojo's family that she adapted to the Ghanaian cooking and gender conventions and that she "so much wanted to be part of their family." (110) Thus Kojo overcomes gender conventions and Shirley is limited to a gender role by their engagement in cultural exchange.

and briefly May wanted to kill her daughter" (46). May also plays on Alfred's racism in order to save her son Dirk from prison (cf. 326).

Nevertheless, despite the failure of the few mediators and the racism and bigotry of some characters, nobody is completely demonised or condemned. The novel denies easy judgement and easy answers – the racist thoughts and actions are condemned but not the characters. The reader's sympathy is directed in a dynamic and rather ambivalent fashion throughout the novel.

In the following section I will focus on some examples of characterisation and the respective character's role in cultural exchange processes. I will begin with Kojo. He is dead and cannot speak for himself, so he is spoken for and characterised by Shirley. His main attributes are that he is educated, liberal but homophobic and – according to Shirley – "westernized" (107). Everything the reader knows about him, his opinions and what he did is filtered through Shirley and thus biased, firstly because of her personal feelings and secondly because quite some time has passed and she has to rely on her memories. Shirley's descriptions of Kojo are often strange, at times she seems to overemphasize the 'exoticness' she likes about him (cf. 109) and his social and academic status (cf. 108). Also, she is slightly presumptuous in her description, e.g. when she assumes he was still attached to the religious traditions he knew from his family, or when she calls him westernized just because he was not religious. "Maybe he is with his ancestors… He was westernized, he dismissed all that, but I think that part of him still believed it. He said he was a Marxist, but these things go deep." (107) Be this as it may, Kojo still functioned as mediator of Ghanaian social practices, people and food for Shirley.

Elroy King is characterised as someone who easily feels victimized. He complains about racism in England, yet he lives in a rather segregated community. He shows no intention to engage in cultural exchange, though Shirley is of course an exception, albeit the only non-Jamaican-British contact of his we learn about. He divides his world into 'us' and 'them', and his comments are characterised through generalisations and accusations: "You people think you own the language" (137) or "*You people* have little faith […] You people don't need to [believe], though, not like *we* do … is just a luxury for you." (301, emphasis added, S.v.L.) Elroy often complains with varying degrees of explicitness about institutionalised racism and signs of white people feeling superior to him, but there is no further evidence to support his claims. In fact, Elroy is not a very reliable character, as he lies e.g. to

Shirley about his affairs – the reader learns about them from Winston. It appears that because of Elroy's fear of discrimination, founded possibly on his own experience or his mother's stories, he resigns and keeps the contact with white British people to a minimum and goes out with his "brethren" and "sistas" only (233). He takes a defensive stance and largely refuses cultural exchange.

Alfred's characterisations are a challenge for the reader. The first information the reader receives about Alfred White is that he is a racist. Furthermore, different family members characterise him as strict and violent in addition to his racist talk. However, readers are confronted with a different assessment by him and a change of behaviour in the end. In the chapters where Alfred's perspective prevails, he remembers many things from his past and demonstrates inferiority complexes – above all because of his low class status and lack of education. He remembers that he was afraid of new things and people, hates himself, thinks he is stupid, and even fears that his children do not like him (cf. 184-190). This perspective shows a rather frail side of the otherwise differently perceived dictator. Alfred even admits that he knows in his heart that his violent outbreaks are wrong, but tries to defend himself by referring to even worse cases of violence (cf. 188), e.g. his own violent father (cf. 200). Finally, Alfred tells the police about Dirk's involvement in Winston's murder, because ultimately he sees himself as a man of principle who knows that "in the end, there's right and wrong" (332).

His stereotypes appear to be linked to an idealized version of the past. In his memories the people are almost exclusively white and he longs back to this time in which he was healthier and employment better. Therefore, he rejects everything that has changed since and thus also rejects immigrants and their offspring. Alfred uses metaphors of war and fight frequently to describe his encounters with (black) people on the street, possibly a sign of disorientation resulting from shell shock (cf. 200, 331 and 334). This perception of encounters is a clear obstacle to any exchange. In addition, his rejection of intercultural encounters and cultural exchange is based on nostalgia and his inferiority complexes.

May is another character who rejects cultural exchange as well as any change. Her explicit comment is that "new things were probably not meant for them" (55). Instead, she wants to continue to live as she has always done. Her words of encouragement to herself, "Onward, onward" (20), are reminiscent of the line from "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred Tennyson. The soldiers of the Light

Brigade do not question their orders and – although they should know better – ride into their death. This reference to the poem points towards the catastrophe in the end. May refuses to question her or Alfred's way of dealing with life and with problems, such as Dirk's violent behaviour, and is thus partly responsible for Dirk's crime in the end.

May is sometimes described as a woman who enjoys being a caring mother and wife above all, but in other instances she fails to protect Shirley and makes her give up her daughter for adoption out of fear of comments from the community. May also tells a friend that Dirk's conception was unplanned – she openly calls him a "mistake" (87) –, so her image of the caring mother reveals cracks. In addition, she is characterised as a coward and racist, e.g. in her encounter with Winston (see below) and when she tries to talk Alfred into saving Dirk by emphasizing that Winston was black, appealing to Alfred's racism in order to save her son from his conviction. She has only white English friends and no contact to other cultures; her thoughts expose a variety of prejudices.

Winston King is characterised quite differently by various other characters. Thomas sees in him a fanatic who seeks revenge for the history of discrimination and suppression of black people (cf. 31). May perceives him as a threat (cf. 117). And his Afro-Caribbean community would make him an outcast if they knew he was gay. A chapter which is dedicated to Winston's perspective (231-236) focuses on his discovery of his homosexuality and his feeling of alienation. Because he is black and homosexual, he suffers from double discrimination: because of his skin colour and his sexual orientation. In addition, Winston hides his sexual orientation from his family and British Jamaican community because homosexuality is frowned upon to say the least (cf. 232-234). It is even illegal in Jamaica (cf. 234). When Winston is about to commit suicide, a stranger introduces him to a hidden subculture of homosexual men. Winston's partners stay anonymous. There are no more explicitly homo- or bisexual characters in the novel, however, there are some allusions to Dirk being attracted by men, black men to be more precise. His mother finds homosexual porn magazines with black men, and the scene when he meets Winston in the lavatories is ambivalent, too. Dirk and Winston share some degree of self-hatred, and their perceived need to hide their homosexuality might be a reason why they look for other (sub)cultures they could join for reassurance. The results of their search for

belonging are very different, however. Winston finds connections at the university and Dirk in a fascist gang.

Dirk's character is linked to a lot of pain and suffering. The situations in which the reader is confronted with his racist ideology and propaganda are almost insufferable for the reader. This is one side of Dirk. However, through information provided by Dirk, the narrator and other characters, he becomes a rounded and rather complex character. There are many attempts to explain Dirk's behaviour (even before the murder), but the tentative results all have in common that they are rather explorative – also for the other characters who try to understand him – and cannot serve as excuses. His siblings, e.g., had the same parents and turned out quite different. Apparently, even when he was young, he felt let down by his family and his teachers, who had already given up on him at a very early age (cf. 61). "Her youngest son was hard to like" (59), we learn from May, and Dirk even says: "I heard her tell Ruby Millington that I was a mistake, which made me mad." (87) Dirk believes that nobody likes him (cf. 246, 247) and sees himself as a victim: "My whole fucking life I had been treated like dirt. *(Dirt White that's who you are Dirt White)*" (214). Looking for a scapegoat or someone weaker to let off steam he turns to women and black people: "Dirk hated women. They hated him, and he hated them. And foreigners. […] How he hated them. How he hated himself." (284) Dirk tries to hang on to something, which in his case are often authorities like e.g. his father – it felt good "being with the man in charge" (91) – or the group of racist friends in which he feels strong and accepted for some time. The effect of this characterisation is that Dirk is presented as a thoroughly confused character with many inner conflicts. But his outbursts, the verbal racism as well as the murder are not excused or glossed over.

Dirk tries to find something he can hold onto to reassure himself. His parents fail because they show no interest, his teachers give up on him, his favourite person, Shirley, leaves the family – which he interprets as a betrayal. Dirk is not strong enough to create an identity for himself. He finds 'help' in a group of racists who pretend to care for one another and in whose presence he feels strong. Because Dirk as well as his friends appear to have no skills, intelligence or anything else which could be used to create a group identity, they concentrate on something nobody can take away from them – the fact that they are born in Britain – and fluff this up and try to turn it into something meaningful. They refer to some kind of idea of cultural

purity and Englishness which makes any conscious cultural exchange impossible. In a rather humorous scene, however, Maggie Gee exposes Dirk's assessment: when Dirk asks for something English to eat, he demands "spag bol" (153), Spaghetti Bolognese, which is of course an originally Italian dish.[482] This serves as an example that even his negative attitudes towards new or foreign influences cannot stop cultural exchange from happening – even if it is just food.

To sum up briefly: although theoretically, characters such as Thomas could function as mediators – because he works in a library with multicultural customers, he is a writer and an intellectual capable of self-reflection –, there are only few mediators and instances of actual exchange in the novel. Shirley, who is at least in a mixed ethnic relationship, could work as a mediator – and does to some extent – but she is also biased and fails because of the stubbornness and incorrigibility of her family. In many instances, characters just refuse to engage in cultural exchange, white characters as well as black ones. The obstructers outweigh the mediators and their motivations are a combination of a lack of education, a lack of self-confidence as well as fear and prejudice. And it is here that the novel differs from other fictional accounts of cultural exchange. Maggie Gee manages to account for the complex, ambivalent and contradictory feelings and half-conscious assumptions of white, 'indigenous' characters.

4.4.3.4. Narrative Transmission: Multiple Perspectives

In *The White Family*, the narrative transmission alternates between third-person narration combined with the use of multiple focalisers and instances of first-person narration. The majority of information is conveyed through the eyes and minds of the various characters, the White family members and Thomas being the most important ones in terms of narrative space[483]. The variety of different perspectives, which sometimes collide, sometimes reinforce themselves, will be analysed here in detail in connection to cultural exchange processes.

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[482] This is a typical cultural exchange process and was described by Gesa Stedman as "overt rejection with covert appropriation" (Stedman, Gesa. *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 126.). See more on this phenomenon below, page 207f.

[483] The headings of the chapters usually refer to the characters which are used as focalisers in the respective chapter. Eleven chapters are named after May, in addition to two more she shares with Alfred. Thus May's perspective plays a prominent role in 13 chapters. Shirley, Dirk and Thomas follow with nine chapters each. Alfred plays the biggest part in six chapters, two are devoted to Elroy and one chapter focuses exclusively on Winston. Thus, Thomas has surprisingly as many chapters devoted to him as Shirley. The sympathies, however, are not distributed proportionally to the space or number of chapters the characters occupy.

Through the narrative transmission in *TWF*, which consists mainly of insights into a character's mind, in particular memories, the characters' assessment becomes visible. The reader learns whether a character perceives an exchange process as something positive or welcome, or whether they see it as a negative, unwanted or threatening process. The characters interpret such processes differently and their judgement in combination with the sympathy steering of the narration influence the overall assessment of cultural (ex)change to be found in the novel.

The actions, but even more the thoughts of a character determine whether they are perceived as likeable or not. This again has an effect on whether readers identify with the respective character, trust his or her judgment and how the readers perceive of the novel in general. One is more likely to believe and agree with a likeable character, so in return readers are less likely to agree with Dirk's assessments, because he is not portrayed to be likable. The reader's sympathy is steered in an ambivalent way throughout the novel: May, for example, is portrayed as a poor and helpless old woman in some instances and in others as a racist and a hypocrite. There are no easy judgments or condemnations to be made on the part of the reader.

Also, through the narrative transmission in *TWF*, the readers can trace whether a formerly transferred element is still perceived as a 'foreign' addition by a character or whether it has been incorporated to their idea of their culture and self. A humorous example for such incorporation is Alfred's assessment of the animals in the park. When talking about "good old English" birds he includes budgerigars. These birds, however, were also imported at some point, but apparently so long ago, that they are not perceived as foreign any more. Alfred affectionately calls them "budgies" and insists that they have been around forever and thus are British. This utterance highlights the importance memory – or a personal perspective – and knowledge play in cultural exchange processes. As Alfred does not remember a time when budgerigars were not yet that common in the UK and as he does not know where they are from originally, they are part of his idea of Britishness. The formerly imported object does not appear foreign any more. This incorporation works for social practices, too, but it is not prominent in the novel.

The initial rejection of things foreign and a later appropriation combined with the denial of their foreign origin is a typical element of cultural (ex)change processes. Gesa Stedman describes a "constant cycle of newness – imitation –

rejection, and imitation"[484] in texts on cultural exchange in seventeenth-century France and England. She identified representations that used strategies of "overt rejection with covert appropriation"[485]. While foreign influences such as fashion and social practices were rejected at first, their origin was denied once the objects etc. were appropriated. Alfred shows such typical behaviour, too. He rejects everything unknown to him – or everything he assesses as un-English. Once an object or practice has found its way into his everyday life and idea about Englishness, he denies its formerly foreign nature.

An analysis of narrative transmission and narrative perspectives can also reveal changes in a character's construction. Such change can be an indicator for cultural exchange. Shirley e.g. reflects explicitly how her interpretation of social practices has changed through her marriage with Kojo. She has also adapted to some of the practices he transferred from Ghana.

Many of the characters struggle to make sense of their lives and the society they live in. How they perceive of the British society they live in, what is part of it and what not – and whether they make this distinction at all – is communicated through the multiple perspectives in the novel. A number of characters divide their world up into English (good) and foreign (threat), among them are May, Alfred, Dirk – and implicitly also Thomas. They notice that change has taken place, compared to a past they have either experienced themselves or know only from stories, and they do not know how to cope with it. Even Shirley wonders "what was bloody English these days?" (146f.), when she tries to buy her father a present and looks for something he might like. But when she gets him a John Bull figurine, something she thinks he will like because it represents for her the same kind of backward understanding of Britishness and idea of national identity as does her father, Alfred feels insulted. He does not perceive of himself as stereotypical or representative of the John Bull kind of Englishness. This is one of the first instances in which the reader is confronted with a different side of Alfred. In this case, Alfred does not conform to what May, Shirley and Thomas think about him.

The novel also shows how May's, Dirk's and Alfred's categorizations and assessments fail. Dirk learns that the barkeeper he insults because of his foreign

[484] Stedman, Gesa. *Cultural Exchange in Seventeenth-Century France and England*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 115.
[485] Ibid.: 126.

sounding name was "[b]orn just round the corner, mate" (249).[486] And while Alfred is at first scared when he encounters a couple of black teenagers in the street at night, he realises in the end that they are "not the enemy" (334) when they help him to get to the police station.[487] In fact, both Alfred and Dirk use war metaphors to refer to the situation of living together with foreigners and non-white British inhabitants. In Alfred's case, this might go back to his shell shock and disorientation he faced after the war (cf. 200f. and 330f.). In Dirk's case, his war metaphors are mostly retrieved from the right-wing magazine *Spearhead* and his racist friends. This, however, is discredited by other characters and the narrative instance alike. Here is an example:

> Did she notice anything about what was going on? Did she know that a battle was being fought, on the streets of London, Liverpool, et cetera? – Bristol. That was the other one. The other spot where they'd gone in force. According to *Spearhead*. (Dirk had never been to Bristol.) (37)

In this case, the narrator tells the reader that Dirk had never been to Bristol and does not know himself, but only retrieves his "knowledge" from propaganda magazines. In other instances, Dirk's repetition of *Spearhead* slogans is so ridiculous that he cannot be taken seriously, e.g. his talking about his lost "birthright" (156) and the new battle of Britain: "We shan't lose the war. It's too important. The future of England depends on us. Never forget what *Spearhead* says… *We are many and our reach is long*." (157)

In addition, Dirk almost always misjudges situations – after being confronted with his perspective, some other character or the narrator gives the reader a different account of what has happened, e.g. Dirk thinks that all customers in the pub are his friends and on his side, when the readers know that they stare at him because he is loud and drunk (cf. 250). Dirk's assessments are not trustworthy; he is an unreliable narrator whose accounts need to be questioned constantly.

The situation in which May and Winston meet for the first and only time serves as an excellent example of a biased character perspective and what happens when it is contrasted with a different one. When May meets Winston on the street, she is scared at first and perceives of him as a threat, very likely because of his skin colour. These are the words with which May's perception of Winston are described:

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[486] Alfred in turn refuses to acknowledge that Elroy is British. When Shirley tells her father that Elroy was born in Peckham (cf. 53), he still insists that "he's about as British as bananas" (52).

[487] It starts with: "Then he saw the enemy come out …" (333), then he has a closer look: "They were laughing, but it didn't seem unfriendly. He saw something else; they were just children." (334) Alfred finally comes to a point where "he let them help him, a wounded soldier […] (so they weren't the enemy, he'd just got confused.)" (334)

> But someone was coming, two feet in Nike trainers, *big* black and white trainers moving quiet and fast, and she looked up to see an *enormous black man looming* out of the rain, *panting*, *gasping*, his golden *eyes boring into hers* and she shrank back, covering the money with her skirt, as the *pantherish face swooped down towards her*. 'Help,' she cried feebly, still out of breath, and then 'Help,' louder, but no one would hear her, and she thought, in that instant, *knowing that she would die*, please God take care of Alfred and the kids. (117; emphasis added, S.v.L.)

In addition to words like "enormous black man", "looming" and "pantherish face", even the fast pace of the narration tells us that May is scared and breathless. Her assessment is quite clearly that the black man is going to kill her and take her money. She even goes on: "Waiting for his shoe to crush her soft stomach, waiting for bone to smash into her face" (131). However, Winston only wanted to help her. When May understands this, "she felt shocked, and ashamed." (132) When she realises her error, she wants to make up for her first reaction, hoping that "[p]erhaps he hadn't noticed she was afraid" (132), and starts rambling on. At first, Winston is amused, but then gets annoyed when she asks him whether he was local.[488] Once Winston is gone, May thinks about this situation and reassures herself that she is not racist: "I blame the light, for the misunderstanding. My eyes aren't good, but I'm not prejudiced. I never have been. Unlike poor Alfred." (143) But the reader already knows through the narrator that she was afraid and that it had something to do with her preconceptions. The effect of this scene is that May is caught and characterised as what she is, i.e. more racist than she would like to admit. In addition, some readers might recognize May's behaviour from their own experience, be it that they have misinterpreted a similar situation, too, or continued to talk nonsense in order to hide a racist assessment. So it could also be a reminder and a warning of how easily these judgments can be made.

Furthermore, it is an example for what black people and other ethnic minorities may have to put up with and must feel like. May makes it worse by wanting to do something for "*his* people" (143): she can only imagine extreme cases like rescuing a drowning child from a river or a car accident, but nothing from her daily life where help would be most needed. In the end, she even forgets Winston's name right away (cf. 143). The name was the only thing or personal information which made him an individual person in her eyes rather than just a young black man,

[488] "Are you local? I've lived here all my life. It's not what it was, Hillesden Rise. I don't mean because of the foreigners. I'm not saying you're a foreigner –" (132).

one of ‘the others’. The experience is thus portrayed as short-lived, without a lasting effect or transformative power.

The categorization of self and others is not exclusive to the novel’s white characters. Elroy, for example, divides his world up into black and white. He spends almost all his time in an segregated black West Indian community, refers to Shirley and the English as “you people” (cf. 137) and observes his environment with attention to people’s ethnicity. He complains to Shirley that the only black people he sees in the Tate are service personnel (cf. 298).

Winston is one of the few characters who does not think in the dichotomies of ‘us’ and ‘them’. He is one of the very few who question these concepts, probably because he has seen them fail. He cannot find his place in one of the categories on offer for him. It seems as if he was always part of ‘the others’: he is discriminated against by some English people because of his skin colour, and at the same time has to hide the fact that he is gay from his family because he fears they will cast him out. Winston’s motivation to engage in cultural exchange and explore the hidden homosexual subculture he discovers can be read against this background.

Shirley seems to notice that Winston is struggling to come out and tries to talk about it with Elroy, who cuts her short. He does not seem to understand or want to understand her comments that maybe Winston does not need help to find a suitable wife because he might not be interested in women (cf. 300). Shirley notices a ‘pattern’ here, a homophobic attitude in black communities: “But what was it, she wondered, about black people and homosexuality? It was as if they thought only white men did it. Even Kojo, who was liberal about most things, had been very uneasy around gay men.” (300) She interprets it as a reaction to discrimination, i.e. that those discriminated try to exclude and disdain others they can mark as ‘different’ (cf. 300). This assessment fits Elroy as well as Dirk.

Thomas’s perspective, which is focused on as often as Shirley’s and Dirk’s with regard to the number of chapters, functions as an outsider’s perspective on the White family and their impression of Hillesden. He also serves as an outsider to whom Alfred can tell his version of the story of the Whites. While Thomas tries to establish his self-image of an educated middle-class intellectual, his buried stereotypes come to light nevertheless.

One example is the scene where Thomas, the librarian, meets Winston King in the library. Winston had forgotten his notes for a paper on James Baldwin and

comes back to reclaim them. Thomas and his colleague Suneeta do not know that Winston is writing a paper for school and interpret the "fanatical notes" in "obsessional neat italic writing" (30-31) as preparation for revenge for many years of racism and exploitation of black people. Also, Thomas interprets everything about Winston, i.e. his looks, the way he walks, how Winston looks at him, as threats:

> And then [Thomas] began to feel vaguely threatened, for W. King, having reclaimed his notes, proceeded to eyeball Thomas closely as he read him a wish-list of titles, including two books by Eldridge Cleaver, and *One Hundred Years of Lynchings*. As the boy pronounced the titles, he had given a curious half-smile, half-laugh, at Thomas, and Thomas was aware of the boy's height, and youth, and his long strong fingers, playing with a pen. (31)

Thomas concludes: "Libraries were always full of nutters. Parks, libraries ... where else could they go" (31). However, once the readers learns that Winston is gay, the scene can be re-interpreted: maybe Winston "demanded to be looked at" (30) in order to flirt with Thomas; hence also the eyeballing, smiling and playing around with a pen.

Another example which reveals Thomas' bigotry in terms of racism is his reaction to the change he notices in the library: an equal-opportunity counsellor comes in, new books are bought to cater for new needs (i.e. non-racist but from various cultures and languages) and some other books are thrown out because they were said to be insulting to some (cf. 28 and 230). Thomas is rather annoyed by this change and feels "it's all gone too far" (28), but then reminds himself that he is "not allowed to think things like that" (ibid.). This is a situation in which Thomas' hidden feelings are revealed. Also it may serve as a reminder that it is not enough to change the language or the products on display; racism remains. In such an environment, although the library might theoretically serve as a promising contact zone with a variety of books and people from different cultures, cultural exchange might be hampered by the lack of motivation to engage in such exchange or even its rejection by the protagonists. Top-down anti-racist education cannot work if the agents involved refuse their role as mediators.

The multiple perspectives that the reader encounters in *The White Family* are not reconcilable. The colliding and alternating perspectives make *The White Family* a complex novel, where nothing is just black or white and where constant reader participation and questioning is necessary. The readers are kept on their toes, among other things because of the many changes of perspective – moving back and forth

from one character to another but also from 3rd person narration to 1st person narration. Reassessments become necessary when the characters' perspectives clash, which is the rule rather than the exception. Often this is done through contrasting two points of view, dramatic irony or information received from the narrator.

The fact that the characters' assessments are mistaken means that the readers have to be alert. Sometimes, the additional perspective or information comes much later in the novel, so that the mistaken views of the characters are often only revealed late, which might also lead some readers to go along with the characters' interpretations at first and then be caught red-handed themselves. In fact, the most evocative instances of racism are not the obvious cases but rather the ones that are hidden, where it is much more shocking to find out that a character one trusted is biased or even that one fell for a stereotype oneself. These instances, e.g. how May and Thomas first meet Winston (cf. above), make the novel so powerful and at the same time challenging and even uncomfortable at times. This may be one of the reasons why editors and publishers worried about the profit potential of such a complex read when compared to more straight-forward, less complex and all-together more 'digestible' crowd-pleasing novels.

4.4.4. Concluding Remarks

Maggie Gee's novel *The White Family* explores obstacles to cultural exchange processes from a rather unusual angle in the contemporary British literary field: the novel represents various forms of racism felt and expressed by white characters. It also represents racist attitudes to be found in black British communities. And it does so successfully. *The White Family*'s difficult topic was an obstacle for the publication of the novel itself, but critics praised its take and the author's courage to tackle such a difficult topic.

There is little reciprocal exchange in relation to practices and Gilroy's idea of peaceful "cohabitation" or "conviviality"[489] in *The White Family*. Instead, most of the various exchange processes and results occur on a more commercial level. Shops carry international products, the local pubs offer international food including the obligatory curry, and immigrants from all over the world have turned some parts of Hillesden into a lively community. However, an important context for cultural exchange processes are love relationships. In contrast to family relations that are

[489] Cf. Gilroy, Paul. *After Empire, Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* London: Routledge, 2004. xi.

genealogical, love relationships are a matter of choice. However, even these exceptional relationships have limited reach in terms of cultural exchange.

The focus on the White family allows the author to contrast a number of different perspectives. While Alfred and Dirk are openly racist – Dirk attempts to please his father by copying his racist attitudes – May displays a slightly more hidden form of racism. Darren and Shirley are socially mobile, but they are not exempt from showing stereotypical ideas either. The librarian Thomas is the most bigoted character with regard to prejudice, as illustrated by his false accusations against Winston that are unveiled to be prejudiced through juxtaposition with Winston's perspective. In addition to the White family, the novel also includes the perspectives and migration histories from Kojo and Elroy's family who emigrated to the UK from Africa and the Caribbean respectively. There are references to the Windrush Generation as well as African and South Asian migration to the UK. In these instances, the difficulties caused by racism on the job market and in British institutions is highlighted.

While the adult characters in the novel are prejudiced, there are possibilities of hope for the next generation: the children at school grow up in multiethnic contexts and appear comfortable with it. The unfortunately rather soppy end – Shirley's pregnancy with dizygotic twins from both Elroy and Thomas – also adds to the tentatively positive outlook. "Shirley bore two boys, unidentical twins, two boys conceived on the same day […] but one much paler than the other." (342)[490] The novel provides a brief outlook to the future: the babies reunite Shirley with the King family, the mixed-ethnic babies help to heal the wounds.[491] The difficulty that this constellation might potentially bring is also addressed: "Elroy, with luck, will be father to both, if his relationship to Shirley survives, for it's hard to bear such grief, such anger. But they lessen a little as time passes …" (342).

This ending appears rather far-fetched and forms a strong contrast to the rest of the otherwise gloomy tone of the novel. It can be interpreted as a ray of hope for the future through a new, mixed-ethnic generation, but it is also a bit naïve and does not match the complexity of the rest of the novel. I believe that the image of Shirley

[490] This does not lead to another conflict as Elroy does not suspect that the paler baby could be from a different father. "Elroy, mercifully, has no doubts [… and] will be father to both, if his relationship to Shirley survives …" (342).
[491] "The whole King family loves the babies. They can never be separated from the past, and yet they are alive …" (342).

joining the King family at the graveyard (see below) would have been strong enough to express hope.

If one leaves the pregnancy aside, the last scene of the novel is particularly interesting. Shirley decides to attend Winston's funeral instead of her father's (cf. 344). While the characters cannot seem to find a way to connect in their everyday lives, the novel repeatedly refers to the uniting force of shared pain. Shirley feels finally connected to the Asante family when mourning Kojo's death (cf. 110), the Kings and the Whites are both mourning the death of their close relations.[492] And on a different level, Thomas remembers something that Baldwin wrote: "What was the wonderful thing Baldwin said? 'Books taught me that the things that tormented me the most were the very things that connected me to everyone who was alive and who had ever been alive.'" (226)

Shirley's choice to walk and mourn with the King family and Sophie's acceptance hints at a conciliatory outcome. The division between the Kings and the Whites, between black and white characters is not set in stone. Change is possible and a matter of choice, as the novel emphasizes through Shirley: "she fell into the line behind, the line of his people who were now her people, hers by choice …" (344).

In contrast to the constellations in e.g. *Maps for Lost Lovers*, the multiple perspectives in *The White Family* are not reconcilable. In addition, the racist attitudes of the characters make the novel an uncomfortable read in large parts. The ambivalent construction of the characters and Maggie Gee's composition skills prevent the story from slipping into shallow criticism of racists. As Maya Jaggi writes in *The Guardian*: "Gee gives [her characters] space with neither posturing condemnation nor condescension. They, though not their views, have authorial sympathy."[493] The novel continuously addresses the sensitive issue of racism and is one of the few contemporary novels that gives so much attention to white middle- and working-class racism. The ambivalent characters and 'cloudy reflectors' keep readers on their toes and reject easy judgments. That such a complex and challenging read cannot appeal to the masses is obvious. Achieving cultural exchange and making it a success for all concerned is a complex process which requires complex forms of representation. The complexity of this process is adequately translated into equally complex aesthetical terms by Maggie Gee.

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[492] "Close up, you see two separate streams. [… the river] has two banks, but all of it mourns. A great tide of people stops in the graveyard, crying, poised on the edge between past and future." (345)
[493] Jaggi 2002b.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

In the opening sections of this chapter, I compare the representations of cultural exchange in the selected novels as well as the aesthetic means through which this is done. I concentrate on time and space, plot patterns, characterisation as well as on the representation and assessment of cultural exchange, the roles ascribed to literature and art for cultural exchange in the texts and aesthetic observations. Furthermore, in section 5.7. I will have another look at the literary field, in particular the marketing efforts by the publishers, the reception of the novels, their sales numbers as well as the bandwagon effect. This chapter closes with some concluding remarks and an outlook.

5.1. Time and Setting: Social Contexts

The representations of time and space in all novels refer explicitly to contemporary Britain and British history. The period covered by the narrations stretches from the early 20th century to the early 21st century. The 1960s and 1980s also feature prominently as arrival times of many immigrant characters. The past is often evoked through flashbacks and memories, which can be linked to important events that explain some of the reasons for migration from the Indian Subcontinent or the Caribbean to the UK. Among them were the time of the Raj and the Partitions, World War II as well as the post-war years when immigration to the UK was still relatively easy. These representations of the past, however, are seldom positive. They reveal many instances of forced migration and exile as well as the disappointment experienced by many immigrants who were not welcomed by the 'mother country', but treated with contempt and degradation.

Most settings are linked to London and in the case of *Maps For Lost Lovers* to Bradford – both with large South Asian and British Asian immigrant communities. Other important settings are India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The juxtaposition between British and South Asian settings is interesting as it is not only a contrast between countries, but also a juxtaposition of city and countryside. The areas in Britain are either London or at least an industrial town. The areas in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are rural areas (with the exception of Dhaka). So the comparisons that are implicitly or explicitly created between Britain and the Subcontinent are asymmetrical, one could even say unfair.

The value judgements made by the comparisons are often rather blatant – and in *Brick Lane* most extreme: England represents progressiveness, offers freedom and supports individual pursuits of happiness. The Subcontinent, in contrast, is represented as antiquated and dangerous for independent thinkers, as it supports collectivism, strict rules, misogynist conventions and rigid hierarchies. There is less freedom of choice and more dogmatism than in the UK, where individual freedom and choice are granted for those who adapt to the mainstream society.

The attacks of 9/11 and 7/7 do not play relevant roles, with the exception of *Brick Lane*: Karim becomes more radical after a wave of Islamophobia following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The other novels are either set earlier or the exact time is not mentioned explicitly and the texts show no sign of a relation to 9/11 and 7/7.

As many novels cover a large time span, they could potentially comment on a change in the conditions of immigrants and cultural exchanges. In *The White Family*, for instance, some institutions have become more politically correct, with the exception of the police. And while some things have improved and characters such as Kojo and Winston have found their position within the British middle-class[494], other characters still hold a grudge against the British and refuse to interact with them. In this case, the flashback to the past offers a reason for this rejection of cultural exchange. *Maps For Lost Lovers* comments on changed attitudes from white people from openly aggressive and hostile to 'only' implicitly racist. The Pakistani community in Dasth-e-Tanhaii observes changes in the second generation: a number of the children, who are mentioned in passing, have left their parents in order to live lives outside the strict community conventions. And in *Brick Lane*, the gentrification of the area and increased interest in British Asian (cultural) production that is referred to ironically opens up opportunities for Nazneen and her friends.

5.2. Plots

The selected novels reveal a number of shared plots and subplots. All four novels centre on family conflict plots in which characters born in Britain and their immigrant parents engage in various conflicts.

[494] Winston, for example, has moved up socially compared to his other family members who struggle economically and hold jobs that are not highly appreciated by mainstream society. However, Winston's decision does not seem to stem from an idealisation of the British middle-class, but it rather appears as an escape from the homophobic environment he grew up in.

Brick Lane represents an 'immigrant success story', in which the protagonist's immigration to the UK functions as her salvation. Her sister in Bangladesh whose story is juxtaposed to Nazneen's suffers much more hardship due to her hostile environment. Thus, not only is Nazneen's success celebrated but also London as the enabling environment.

The White Family and *Londonstani* have slightly different plots. *The White Family* also works with the family plot, but this time it deals with white racism, not the shortcomings of the immigrant communities. In addition, its allusion to the murder of Stephen Lawrence gives it a distinct reference to recent British history. *Londonstani* has an interesting plot because of the rather unusual direction of assimilation. Most novels centre on immigrants assimilating to British conventions, not on white British characters who attempt to integrate into a South Asian subculture.

Some of the novels – including some others in the literary field of that time – share happy endings that are not always plausible, in particular in *The White Family*, where the rest of the novel paints a rather bleak picture. A common feature in this context is a mixed-race baby that symbolises hope for the future. This is used in *The White Family* as well as in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*, to name just the most popular examples.[495] *Maps for Lost Lovers* also uses the symbol of pregnancy for hope, but in this case it is turned on its head when the reader is led to think that all of Suraya's attempts, including her pregnancy, will not return her to her son. In addition, Jugnu's and Chanda's baby, their sign of hope for the future, dies with the murdered lovers.

In *MFLL, Brick Lane* and *Londonstani* the subplots appear to reinforce stereotypes directed against Muslims, such as arranged marriages, an obsession with honour and reputation and honour killings. The multiple perspectives do not lead to an end that sheds a more pluralistic light on this specific Muslim community.

Interestingly, most novels also share subplots that criticise the commodification of ethnicity minority cultural production. *Brick Lane* makes references to East End tourism ("real curry experience" and the people who take pictures of Nazneen because she looks so 'exotic'). In the end, the women around

[495] *Small Island* ends with the white British character Queenie giving birth to a mixed-race child and asking her black lodgers to adopt her son to spare him from discrimination. In the film adaptation, Queenie's baby reappears as an adult, a grandfather in fact, who explains his family history to his (black) grandchildren. This added story in combination with the atmospheric music ends on an exaggerated feel-good note.

Nazneen benefit from an increased interest in Asian or fusion fashion (cf. *BL*: 481). And in Bangladesh, Hasina reports an exaggerated interest in 'exotic' British looks and practices used by the upper class in Bangladesh, represented through Lovely, to increase their status. *Londonstani* in turn revolves around the big market for desi nights, bhangra DJs and the fusion of multicultural elements by the music and fashion industries. This criticism of commodification is also shared in Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel *Tourism* (2006), in which the protagonist exploits the interest in his 'exotic' self to his sexual and economic advantage.

5.3. Characters: Mediators and Obstructors

The inventory of characters and their descriptions are often organised in contrasting constellations between e.g. old and young, with or without a history of migration in the family, educated and not-educated, religious and non-religious, male and female. They are often rather static types and show only little development, but in most novels they are at least complex.

The characters are juxtaposed through family constellations. With regard to cultural exchange one can then see who enables cultural exchange and who obstructs it. One important result of the analyses is that rejection of cultural exchange is mostly represented as a result of a lack of education rather than as a consequence of ethnicity or nationality. May and Alfred White who reject everything new and Shamas who embraces other cultures are two examples.

What is also striking in many character inventories is the absence of white British characters – with the exception of *The White Family*, of course, and Jas in *Londonstani*. This leaves the task of exchange with the immigrants and their children – and Britain and the British are only marginally criticised for failed exchanges. Britain seems to function more as a background and legal and political framework rather than as an equal player.

Furthermore, religion is represented as a problem for exchanges, not so much the racist whites – except in *TWF*. Religion is represented negatively, Islam as well as Sikhism and Christianity. All religions are portrayed as soothing their believers, promoting endurance, killing off all initiatives for change or justifying honour killings, the suppression of women and segregation. Religious institutions use their followers' fear to exercise power over the believers. While in some cases Islam is represented as a religion that encourages misogynism and segregation, in other

instances it remains unclear to the reader (and possibly also to the characters) what exactly is based on religion and what on tradition. The main reason for this is not that readers might not have an extended knowledge about Islam – even though this might also be the case – but rather that religion and religious practice are not as stable as the fundamentalist characters in the novels want their communities to believe. Religion is constructed, as well as tradition, and the interpretations of religious texts and religious practice are also subject to change. Religion is prone to manipulation e.g. by religious institutions and this is criticised throughout the primary texts – the susceptibility to instrumentalisation as well as the manipulation itself.

Another result is linked to the age and gender of the characters. Male characters – with the exceptions of Chanu, Shamas, Jugnu and Kojo – are more likely to react aggressively to the loss of status they experience after their migration to the UK. Female characters – with some exceptions – are often represented as submissive. Among the female characters are two main groups: those who are complicit in reproducing the misogynist systems – a negative representation of mothers – and those who engage in exchanges in order to benefit from friendlier gender conventions. The younger generation is represented as more selective and open to changes, while the older generation seems to favour segregation. The younger generation is educated, upwardly mobile and open-minded. In fact, the middle class is shown in a positive light, which might please the probably predominantly middle-class readers.

In the selected novels, the generation of the children born in Britain seems to have fewer problems combining South Asian and British elements than their parents. The pressure they experience from the parents is represented as worse than the pressure felt to adapt to British conventions.[496] Often, the children leave their parents in order to live their lives without the pressure to conform to Subcontinental cultural conventions, e.g. in *MFLL*. In *Londonstani* this pressure exerted by the parents even leads to a character's suicide.

5.4. Representations and Assessment of Cultural Exchange

In the selected novels, representations of segregation dominate over those of contact. Nevertheless, mediators, contact zones and exchange processes deserve a closer look. The mediators in the novels are above all characters of a younger generation who

[496] This is not only represented in British Asian novels, but also in *The Boy With The Topknot* (2009), a memoir by Sathnam Sanghera about growing up in a Sikh family in Wolverhampton.

mediate between their South Asian parents and the white British mainstream – or in *TWF* between black and white characters. The children in the selected novels often have fewer problems to construct their identity from South Asian and British elements. Their 'mixing and matching' is often not compatible with the conventions and expectations of their parents or their communities. The younger generation is often represented as more pragmatic than their parents, and they often leave their parents and the communities that demand assimilation. A second important kind of mediation happens in love relationships. Some of the novels seem to suggest that love can overcome obstacles, but it is only rarely linked to successful cultural exchange. *The White Family* and *Londonstani* make the most explicit points about choice in the context of cultural exchange, highlighting that there is no need to assimilate completely to one culture or the other, but that everybody has the chance to 'mix and match'. In addition, *Londonstani* also draws the reader's attention to the way identity can be performed.

The contact that is established between different (sub)cultures is often linked to family constellations and stories of migration, forced or voluntary. There is not as much contact in public spaces as one might expect. The underlying statement here is that there are still too many obstacles and that public spaces need a make-over in order to function as contact zones.

The direction of cultural exchange processes mostly remains one-way, whether it is immigrants establishing so-called parallel communities or whether it is immigrants adapting to British conventions and practices. *Londonstani* is an interesting case as the protagonist unexpectedly turns out to be a white British young man who tries to assimilate to desi subculture in order to improve his social status among his peers. There is little reciprocal exchange between equals, there is often a social hierarchy, and the immigrant characters are at the bottom end. One of the main motivations for the immigrants or their children for exchange is hope for social mobility and access to better jobs. The appropriation of South Asian practices and goods by British characters and institutions is often linked to economic interests and a celebration of 'exotic' otherness (which is in turn criticised). There is more exchange of consumer goods and pop culture compared to individual or collective practices; the actual exchanges are often dominated by economic exchanges (rather than practices). This might not come as a surprise in the market-oriented contexts that the novels were written. Interestingly, the commodification of difference is

frequently addressed and criticised in the novels, even if the novels are sometimes complicit with commodification at the same time.

Many of the novels explore the obstacles that prevent people from different cultural backgrounds from living together peacefully and with respect for each other – and implicitly state that the obstacles outweigh the opportunities for contact and exchange. On the other hand, cultural exchange does not necessarily lead to social peace either.

While social problems, such as a lack of education, are at times described as cultural problems in the novels – e.g. lack of education is ascribed to the Pakistani community when in fact is has more to do with class than ethnic origin – the novels at hand also have a closer look at the social conditions. In the end, however, the obstacles presented are self-inflicted segregation rather than white racism, dogmatic definitions of traditions that hamper changes and a lack of education. This leads to the impression that the migrants are responsible for the lack of exchange. An embrace of the UK and rationality as a guiding principle is represented as desirable in juxtaposition to the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities that are depicted negatively, e.g. inflexible and caught up in rigid social and cultural structures.

The question of mediation and exchange is often turned into a question of the relation between individual and society. While the South Asian communities depicted in the novels emphasize cohesion and community life and reject cultural (ex)change as a threat to it, the representation of British culture focuses more on individual choices and individual freedom. These binary oppositions and representations locate the novels in a tradition shaped by some of the central ideas of the age of Enlightenment. The individual is privileged over the collective, religion is rejected as irrational. The contrast between 'enlightened' individualism and 'backward' collectivism is often also evoked by some British mainstream media in discussions of contemporary societies. They thus devalue immigrant communities and call for assimilation to what they perceive of as white British mainstream. Novels whose representations use the same binary oppositions run the risk of supporting those aforementioned value judgements and ideologies.

5.5. The Role of Literature and Art for Cultural Exchange

References to literature and art fulfil a number of different functions in the selected novels; in *Maps For Lost Lovers* and *The White Family* they are most interesting. In

Brick Lane, literature does not feature very often. There is the Qur'an that Nazneen reads to soothe her and there are Bengali poems that Chanu recites to glorify his country of origin and affirm his cultural identity. Chanu aims to use historical accounts and Bangladeshi poetry to transfer his cultural identity to his daughters – however, without success. In *Londonstani*, there is no literature. The music and fashion scene of the desi subculture serve as context for the creation of their group identity, but to no deeper effect. The mixing and matching on the material level and the identity performances cannot prevent Jas from remaining an outsider.

In *Maps For Lost Lovers* Shamas celebrates literature as creative spaces where everything is possible. In the stories he recites and in his mind, cultural exchange is possible and productive – at least artistically. There is no effect on interpersonal relations. Even though Nusrat and his performance bring people from different backgrounds together, there is no social effect – after the concert people continue to think and act in the same way they did before, there is no empathy. Shamas and his son Charag also explicitly discuss the role of art: Shamas believes it needs to serve a political aim (after all he was exiled because of his political writing), while his son Ujala wants to be free of this burden (but still produces politically relevant art, e.g. his uncircumcised self-portrait).

In *The White Family*, Thomas rather sheepishly and naively claims that "[w]riting is a way of bringing people together."[497] A closer look at e.g. May reveals that she retreats to Tennyson (and Dirk to *Spearhead*) to shut herself off from the life outside her house. It can be read as a sign for her backward orientation, back to a nostalgically romanticised version of England. In addition, reading is no substitution for real contact and no guarantee for an open mind. I agree with Maya Jaggi, who comments that the literary quality of the texts the characters read does not make them any less racist:

> People are characterised by what, or how much, they read. Yet just as there is no given correlation between class and racist views, there is none between literacy and enlightenment. Dirk manages only computer mags and his fascist rag Spearhead. Yet May, a voracious reader, turns out to be as fallible. Shirley, the character who "crosses the river", reconstituting an alternative to the defunct White family, remarks: "Mum thinks she's broadminded but she's as bad as [Dirk]."[498]

[497] Gee 2002: 317.
[498] Jaggi, Maya. "Too close to home." *The Guardian* 25 May 2002. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2002/may/25/fiction.orangeprizeforfiction2002 (accessed 1 October 2012).

James Baldwin, Winston's research project, is a reference to literature being able to pave the way for minorities. In this case, literature helps Winston to understand his identity conflict better, to challenge cultural conventions and find role models and encouragement. And Thomas remembers: "What was the wonderful thing Baldwin said? 'Books taught me that the things that tormented me the most were the very things that connected me to everyone who was alive and who had ever been alive.'" (226) Literature can encourage empathy. It might thus also function as a symbolic mediator for cultural exchange processes.

On a meta-level, an understanding of literature as a mediator can be problematic. While I agree that literature can confront readers with perspectives they did not know or understand before, there is always the risk that novels are then read as authentic accounts of e.g. Bangladeshi life in Britain. This has been the case in particular with novels that feature multicultural characters and constellations. What literature can contribute to cultural exchange processes, though, is to draw attention to the constructedness of all identities and categories. It can make people question claims of homogeneity and cultural purity by questioning such constructions. It can make people question their own judgments and encourage change and empathy. Novels that encourage critical questioning can train the brain to question not only literary texts, but also all other everyday-life representations.

5.6. Aesthetic Aspects

Most of the novels engage in at least some experiments, in particular related to language. However, they are not always successful and not always matched with interesting plots. The experiments with the characters' language in *Londonstani* appears at times unconvincing and while *Brick Lane* is written in English but should *qua* convention be understood as communicated in Bengali, the badly-written letters by Nazneen's sister Hasina are irritating. In *MFLL*, many references to Pakistani art, language and culture are explicitly explained for the non-familiar reader. Cultural exchange, a combination of languages, expressions, metaphors and intertextual references are possible on an aesthetic level. Nevertheless, many metaphors and embellishments in the novel make it difficult to follow the story. Nadeem Aslam makes us "re-see the world through analogy and metaphor"[499], writes Kamila

[499] Shamsie, Kamila. "All You Need Is Love." *The Guardian* 26 June 2004. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/jun/26/featuresreviews.guardianreview17?INTCMP=SRCH (accessed 20 August 2012).

Shamsie, but sometimes this becomes too much, and the point, and the reader, risks getting lost.

Most of the novels employ multiple perspectives in order to give voice to a variety of ideologies and emphasise the heterogeneity of the represented communities. Nevertheless, this technique is not always used to its full potential: in *MFLL*, for example, the many perspectives can be divided into two main camps, i.e. those holding on tightly to conventions, religious conventions in particular, versus those characters that cherish science and reject those conventions they judge as irrational. In a nutshell, it mirrors a debate between religion and enlightenment, on some occasions not very subtly. In *TWF*, however, while all perspectives have in common that they are racist to some extent, the characters are still different enough from one another to communicate the point that nobody is free of preconceptions. In addition, the confrontation with some of the perspectives is still a challenge for the reader, e.g. the fascist Dirk's perspective – something that makes the novel unique.

In connection to the multiple perspectives, the distribution of information is an interesting point. In *Londonstani* and *Maps for Lost Lovers*, in particular, dramatic irony is used to increase the educational potential of the texts. The reader sees the characters fail and is thus encouraged to question conventions and stereotypes and treat everybody as equal.

In *MFLL*, the aesthetic aspects contradict the plot: there is little to no exchange on the story level, only on the aesthetic level. Furthermore, the circular structure of the novel suggests a repetition of oppression and crime and thus adds to the pessimistic outlook. Nevertheless, the novel ends on a slightly positive note with an optimistic Shamas and two new lovers facing the world, which is not convincing. In *TWF*, multiple perspectives on the aesthetic level illustrate the complexity of intercultural encounters. Out of this complexity exchange appears difficult, so here the form and the function of the novel correspond. This is also the case for *Brick Lane*. The novel shows characteristics of a novel of development – and Nazneen's personal development runs parallel to her engagement with British society. Furthermore, in *Londonstani*, what Jas achieves on the level of communication with the reader – i.e. to pass as desi – does not work on the plot level. Plot and form, however, both point towards construction and performance – the constructed language of the narration is as constructed as Jas' identity.

5.7. The Literary Field Context

The four selected novels were mostly reviewed positively – with some exceptions. Some reviewers of *Londonstani* were disappointed because they expected it to run along the lines of *Brick Lane* – because this was how the novel was pitched – , and *MFLL* was criticised as being too complicated, "overwritten and underplotted"[500]. Two factors are usually highlighted in the majority of the reviews. One is the emphasis on insights, such as: "a window on a mostly closed world"[501]. The other is the focus on conflicts: "There seems to be no hope of reconciliation between the two worlds."[502] The reviews often remain superficial and overlook that there is more to *MFLL* than the honour killings and the poetic language, that racism is not limited to white characters in *TWF* and that *Brick Lane* is much more problematic than many reviews suggest.

Brick Lane and *Londonstani* were massively advertised, so part of their success can also be linked to marketing. The publishers had spent large sums on advances – this in itself created headlines –, and the spending on marketing might partly be justified as an attempt to get the money back in. For *White Teeth*, another massively advertised novel, Zadie Smith reportedly received an advance of £250,000[503]. Fourth Estate paid Gautam Malkani an advance of £300,000 for *Londonstani*[504], and Monica Ali received a £300,000 publishing deal with Doubleday before she even finished writing the novel.[505] In contrast, Nadeem Aslam allegedly worked as a waiter on the side and financed his writing with grants.

Brick Lane and *Londonstani* also got into the papers for quite different reasons: *Londonstani* has served as an example for bandwagon marketing gone wrong, and *Brick Lane* received a lot of attention through the protests accompanying the film adaptation. If one wonders why there were no protests after the publication of *Maps For Lost Lovers*, it might be due to the fact that the novel was not as visible

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[500] Peters, Timothy. "Wages of Living in Sin are Dire for Pakistani Emigres." *SFGate* 8 May 2005. http://www.sfgate.com/books/article/Wages-of-living-in-sin-are-dire-for-Pakistani-2636323.php (accessed 3 July 2008). See also: Robson, David. "The Deadly Honour." *The Telegraph* 13 July 2004. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3620449/The-deadly-honour.html (accessed 3 July 2008).
[501] Horspool, David. "In Allah's Hands." *The Times Literary Supplement* 13 June 2003. 22.
[502] Lin Lewis, Su. "A Desert of Loneliness." *The Times Literary Supplement* 16 July 2004. 22.
[503] Cf. Thomas 2006.
[504] Cf. McCrum, Robert. "Has the Novel Lost its Way?" *The Observer* 28 May 2006, http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2006/may/28/fiction.features?INTCMP=SRCH (accessed 1 February 2012).
[505] Cf. Kennedy, Maev. "In a Sense, if You Come Under Fire from those Conservative People, You Must be Doing Something Right" *The Guardian* 28 July 2006. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/jul/28/bookscomment.books (accessed 4 March 2008).

as *Brick Lane*, probably because of the complicated language and the different marketing strategy. There was no media hype attached to it, there was no talk about large advances, Aslam was not branded as the "new Zadie Smith"[506]. In addition, *Maps For Lost Lovers* is more difficult to read because of its rather complicated language, and it addresses a different, more 'highbrow' audience. The same holds true for *The White Family*, which did not cause any outrage either.

A look at the sales numbers can serve as an indicator for the economic success of the novels: *Brick Lane* heads the list with 857,651 sold copies, followed by *MFLL* with 45,280, *Londonstani* with 17,737 and *The White Family* with 12,898 copies sold until 5 December 2012.[507] In comparison, *White Teeth* has allegedly sold over a million copies[508]. The popularity of novels such as *Brick Lane*, *White Teeth* and *Small Island* has led to TV and film adaptations, which in turn also usually leads to a boost in sales.

The cover design of the selected novels is complicit in the commodification of ethnic minority cultural production. I agree with Anamik Saha who identified signs of a

> […] commodification of race, as the potentially unsettling and convivial narratives of cultural entanglements contained within each novel are transformed through their book jackets into palatable, slightly exotic forms of hybridity. According to [the] account [of the editorial director at a major publishing house] the jackets of *Brick Lane* and *Londonstani* were based on a formula and aesthetic seen to have worked in the case of *White Teeth*.[509]

On *Brick Lane* we have the 'exotic' fabrics and images, on *MFLL* the mehndi paintings, and *Londonstani* uses a Bengal Tiger (in a later version, the cover is more ambivalent). The cover of *The White Family* plays with the contrast between black and white by contrasting white and black bodies, or in a later version: hands.

These novels are by no means the only ones applying such images. The cover of Zahid Hussain's novel *Curry Mile* (2006), for example, is a blatant adaptation of the *Brick Lane* cover, and the cover of *Minaret* (2005) by Leila Aboulela features a

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[506] Cf. Procter, James. "New Ethnicities, the Novel, and the Burdens of Representation." *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*. English, James F. (ed.). Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 111.
[507] The sales figures were retrieved from Nielsen BookScan on 5 December 2012 by a colleague in London who has access to the service (cf. appendix). *Brick Lane* may have profited from the film adaptation (2007). In addition, not all novels were published in the same year. So a small portion of the differences in sales might be traced back to the different periods they have been on the market. However, the tendency is so clear that this bias can only be minimal.
[508] Cf. Thomas, Susie. "Zadie Smith's False Teeth: The Marketing of Multiculturalism." *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 4.1 (2006). http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2006/thomas.html (accessed 30 September 2013).
[509] Saha 2010: 193.

veiled woman with a headscarf, Arabic ornaments and on some editions the contour of a mosque.

There are some welcome alternatives, too. Daljit Nagra's poetry collection *Look We Have Coming to Dover*, published in 2007 by Faber and Faber, has chosen a different design.[510] The poetry collection exists in a 'standard' design of the Faber and Faber poetry collection product line without pictures. But there is a second edition with colourful bric-a-brac that might be found in British pound stores (that are often kept by British Asians). So the cover can be associated with British Asians, but it does not employ the same overused and romanticised images. In addition, the bric-a-brac also mirrors the combination of many different identity facets in the collection.

Nevertheless, the authors of the selected novels as well as Daljit Nagra get burdened with the responsibility of representation time and again. When a *Guardian* journalist confronts Nagra with the fact that he was branded "the voice of British Asian poetry"[511] at his launch event, the author tries not to react and waits for the questions to pass.[512] Such questions, however, appear to be unavoidable for ethnic minority writers in the UK. On the other hand, it is also difficult for writers to publish novels that feature protagonists that differ ethnically from the author. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown writes in *The Independent*:

> Diversity is all about boxes, labels, niches, marketing, patronage and trepidation too. If, say, Linda Grant had written about an adulterous Bangladeshi wife, established publishers would have had cold feet, just as they did with Maggie Gee's outstanding novel The White Family, a brave, empathetic exploration of racism in a London family.[513]

Some of the authors mentioned above that were hyped as representatives of 'their' ethnic communities and multicultural Britain have attempted to write about different topics next, possibly in order to prevent being seen as a spokesperson for a certain community forever. Monica Ali's *Alentejo Blue* (2006) is set in Portugal and *In the Kitchen* (2009) is more of a condition-of-England novel in which she explores the North-South divide. Nadeem Aslam published *The Wasted Vigil* in 2008, a novel

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[510] I would like to thank Anamik Saha for introducing me to this collection and for drawing my attention to the distinctive cover design.

[511] AE. "Diary: A Gourd Time." *The Guardian* 10 February 2007. http://books.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,2009444,00.html (accessed 12 May 2008).

[512] "He gave little away, except an endearing rabbit-in-headlights seriousness about poetic form and function, a wry self-awareness […] and the complex shards of the poetry itself." (ibid.)

[513] Alibhai-Brown, Yasmin. "The Curse of Diversity." *The Independent* 9 July 2003. http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/yasmin-alibhai-brown/the-curse-of-diversity-586197.html (accessed 14 June 2011).

about the conflicts in Afghanistan, and *The Blind Man's Garden* in 2013, in which he explores the role of Pakistanis in the Afghan war. Malkani has not written any other novel since *Londonstani*, and Maggie Gee has written about an ecological catastrophe, a story about an African woman in London and Uganda as well as her own memoirs entitled *My Animal Life* (2010).

In any case, the bandwagon effect that followed *White Teeth* and *Brick Lane* seems to have come to a halt.

5.8. Concluding Remarks and Outlook

In the course of the analyses of the selected novels, some results proved to be contrary to the expectations formulated at the outset. In the context of celebrations of multicultural Britain, I expected a dominance of representations of cultural exchange that both sides benefit from. I expected representations of cultural exchange processes that lead to cultural change and a positive evaluation of such creative recombinations. However, the analyses revealed that representations of segregation and rejection of (ex)change dominate and that contact at eye level occurs only rarely. Exchange processes are predominantly exchanges of consumer goods, food and popular culture; they do not occur so much on the psychological level or are related to practices. In addition, the creative results of cultural exchange are more visible on the aesthetic level than on the plot-level. The reasons for the small amount of exchanges are predominantly attributed to the immigrants' side than to the British, with the exception of *The White Family* where the situation is much more ambiguous. The expectation that the widely used setting London offers many contact zones and opportunities for exchange was also disappointed in this context.

The representations of mediators and obstructors, chances and challenges did not offer any solutions to overcome the problems that the constellations of characters from different social or cultural backgrounds cause. The only hope provided in the novels, the birth of a future generation, is hardly convincing if the overall conditions do not change.

The expectation concerning novels on migration that there is a correlation between the popularity or success (either economically or in terms of prizes and reviews) and optimistic plots, a straightforward style and likable characters (i.e. novels that are easy and pleasant to read) could not be entirely confirmed.

In fact, *Brick Lane* remained the only text in this selection that celebrated Britain as a welcoming and enabling country for immigrants, had a likable protagonist, offered a happy ending and presented only little that might make a middle-class reader uncomfortable.

Maps for Lost Lovers was surprisingly popular with critics and quite successful economically, too, even though it was really difficult to read in terms of the language and not pleasant because of the violence, the uncomfortable subplots and the despair to be found in the text. The happy or ambivalent ending did not offer any comfort, in particular if one interprets the circular structure of the novel as a sign of perpetual hopelessness. A reason for its success might be the fact that it was – contrary to *The White Family* – not "too close to home"[514] for the majority of the (middle-class) readers.

Londonstani flopped with the critics, but did quite well on sales. It was difficult to read because of the artificial language. In addition, as a teenager, the protagonist was not that likable. The plot twist – whether credible or not – made it at least interesting.

The White Family again was very popular with critics, but sold the least copies of the selected novels. Maya Jaggi called it in her *Guardian* review "too close to home"[515] and thus may have found the reason why it did not do so well economically. The novel is difficult to read, the characters are not likable, and despite the small and not very convincing ray of hope personified by Shirley's mixed-race twins, it does not paint an optimistic picture of England in terms of racism and social peace.

According to James Procter, Zadie Smith and Monica Ali have followed in the footsteps of Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi.[516] I would argue, however, that these novels, as well as the other selected texts, are not as new or innovative as Rushdie and Kureishi were in the 1980s. I disagree with Procter and do not believe that the novels represent an "everyday indifference to difference"[517] yet. Instead of producing alternative representations of cultural exchange processes and so-called

[514] I owe this wording to Maya Jaggi, who entitled her review of *The White Family* "Too Close to Home" (Jaggi 2002b.).
[515] Jaggi 2002b.
[516] Procter 2005: 111f.
[517] Ibid.: 119.

hyphenated identities, the novels mainly repeat already existing representations, often even stereotypes.[518]

The success of *White Teeth* started off a temporary fashion, a bandwagon effect, but not all novels on multicultural characters published in the aftermath were that interesting. It remains to be seen whether those novels survive in the long-term memory or canon. I do not want to argue that the novels need to be openly political. If the political dimension is missing, however, it would be good if they offered something else to challenge the readers. The predictable plots, flat characters and implausible happy endings that suggest hope for the future even if it contradicts the rest of the novel (e.g. in *The White Family* and *MFLL*) are not enough. Rather interesting are then *Londonstani* because of its plot twist and *The White Family* because it addresses the everyday racism in white middle- and working-classes as well as in black characters. This subject has not been explored to exhaustion.

At the outset, I expected a new wave of novels about new immigrant groups, above all from the Eastern EU countries and China, as these groups of immigrants have grown since the early 2000s. However, with the exception of very few novels, this has not taken off.

Works such as *The Road Home* (2007) by Rose Tremain were applauded by critics, but are shallow in terms of their plot: a poor Polish worker comes to the UK in order to earn money to support his family. He struggles to find work and finally does odd jobs in a restaurant kitchen. The message is: if you work hard, you can make it in Britain. The protagonist returns home and applies his new skills and knowledge of capitalism to his home town and saves it from doom. The palatable novel for British audiences won the Orange Prize in 2008 and was shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award in 2007. Critics lauded the novel's "moving and satisfying climax"[519] and, again, judged it as an authentic account, an insight into an immigrant's life, or "how it really feels to be a foreigner".[520] England, once more, is

[518] Michael Perfect is surprised about "the degree to which [*Brick Lane*] is prepared to employ stereotypes in counterpoint to its narrative of empowerment; the degree to which it prioritizes the celebration of multiculturalism over the destabilization of the stereotypical." (Perfect, Michael. "The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 43 (2008). 119.)

[519] Marriott, Edward. "Down But Not Out in Latterday London." *The Guardian* 10 June 2007. http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/10/fiction.features1 (accessed 30 September 2013).
[520] Ibid.

represented as "a country where the welcome might be frosty but the door stays slightly open"[521] – and where immigrants can learn something for life.

The novels by Marina Lewycka about Ukranian immigrants in the UK, e.g. *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (2005) and *Two Caravans* (2007), do not shine with interesting plots either, nor are they interesting from a literary point of view. The plots are predictable, the style and language is simple, the characters are flat and boring. There are not enough well-written, well-received novels about Eastern European migration to the UK to start another bandwagon effect.

Two other trends followed after the 'multicultural novels': authors in their fifties or older wrote about their relations with their parents, and historical novels appeared back on the stage. A new interest in the War of the Roses, the Tudors and Oliver Cromwell was discovered in novels and TV series, such as Hilary Mantel's novels *Woolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012) or the BBC productions *The Tudors* (2007-2010) and more recently *The White Queen* (2013).

Maybe this is little surprising. One can draw a link between the times in which the economy did well and multicultural constellations are celebrated, and more difficult times and crisis where many people feel insecure and look for orientation. This orientation might then be looked for in history that many assume to be stable and reliable[522] – and in Britain's case, some periods in history are particularly associated with "greatness" and political power. In contemporary mass-markets this might lead to an increased focus on past successes instead of diversity and multicultural experiments.

The analysis of representations of cultural exchange with the help of narratological categories proved to be a productive combination. Even if the selected novels did not represent many successful exchange processes explicitly and even though obstacles to exchanges dominated, the categories of analysis were still useful to explore the representations of those obstacles such as institutions and mindsets. The analysis also revealed which means of representation were dominantly used and to what effect. In fact, the representations' focus on problems in exchange processes and the dominance of economic over cultural exchanges reflect upon the contemporary situation.

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[521] Tonkin, Boyd. "On the Road of Excess: Rose Tremain Follows a Migrant's Progress in a Bloated Britain." *The Independent* 15 June 2007. http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/on-the-road-of-excess-rose-tremain-follows-a-migrants-progress-in-a-bloated-britain-453123.html (accessed 30 September 2013).

[522] History, of course, is also just a construct, but this is not how mainstream audiences assess it.

The model of analysis used in this thesis can also be used for other ethnic constellations and different periods. The model could also be employed to analyse representations of one specific category of objects or specific social practices over time. With some alterations it might also be used for other genres such as poetry and autobiographies. Overall then, cultural exchange theory combined with narratological tools are a productive way of explaining both the aesthetic as well as the plot- and content-related elements of (contemporary) novels which explicitly make cultural exchange one of their key interests.

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7. Appendix

Sales Numbers of the selected novels, retrieved from Nielsen BookScan on 5 December 2012.

TCM Timeline

ISBN	Title	Author	RRP	Binding	Publ Date	Volume	Value
9780552771153	Brick Lane	Ali, Monica	£7.99	Paperback	May 1, 2004	668,741	£4,249,506.60
9780385604840	Brick Lane	Ali, Monica	£12.99	Hardback	Jun 2, 2003	108,190	£1,145,045.17
9780552774451	Brick Lane	Ali, Monica	£7.99	Paperback	Aug 11, 2007	59,478	£385,642.57
9780571221837	Maps for Lost Lovers	Aslam, Nadeem	£7.99	Paperback	Jun 2, 2005	42,479	£262,627.08
9780385604857	Brick Lane	Ali, Monica	£10.99	Paperback	Jun 2, 2003	21,242	£232,116.10
9780007231768	Londonstani	Malkani, Gautam	£7.99	Paperback	Apr 2, 2007	10,552	£70,503.74
9780007231751	Londonstani	Malkani, Gautam	£12.99	Hardback	May 2, 2006	7,185	£71,199.61
9780863561405	White Family,The	Gee, Maggie	£7.95	Paperback	Aug 7, 2002	6,656	£49,416.95
9781846590436	White Family,The	Gee, Maggie	£7.99	Paperback	Jan 4, 2008	3,274	£21,585.44
9780863563805	White Family,The	Gee, Maggie	£11.95	Paperback	Mar 20, 2002	2,968	£34,408.98
9780571221806	Maps for Lost Lovers	Aslam, Nadeem	£16.99	Hardback	Jun 24, 2004	2,801	£41,107.10
Summary						933,566	£6,563,159.34

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TCM Market Totals

Market	Volume	Value	Title Count
TCM	933,566	£6,563,159.34	11

ISBN , Author & Title Scearch Selections

ISBN13	
Author	
Title Search	Londonstani, Londonstani, White Family,The, White Family,The, White Family,The, Maps for Lost Lovers, Maps for Lost Lovers, Brick Lane, Brick Lane, Brick Lane, Brick Lane

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Selbstständigkeitserklärung zur Dissertation

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass es sich bei der von mir eingereichten schriftlichen Arbeit mit dem Titel

Cultural Exchange in Selected Contemporary British Novels

um eine von mir selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasste Arbeit handelt.

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass ich *sämtliche* in der oben genannten Arbeit verwendeten fremden Quellen, auch aus dem Internet (einschließlich Tabellen, Grafiken u. Ä.) als solche kenntlich gemacht habe. Insbesondere bestätige ich, dass ich ausnahmslos sowohl bei wörtlich übernommenen Aussagen bzw. unverändert übernommenen Tabellen, Grafiken u. Ä. (Zitaten) als auch bei in eigenen Worten wiedergegebenen Aussagen bzw. von mir abgewandelten Tabellen, Grafiken u. Ä. anderer Autorinnen und Autoren (Paraphrasen) die Quelle angegeben habe.

Mir ist bewusst, dass Verstöße gegen die Grundsätze der Selbstständigkeit als Täuschung betrachtet und entsprechend der Prüfungsordnung und/oder der Allgemeinen Satzung für Studien- und Prüfungsangelegenheiten der HU (ASSP) geahndet werden.

Datum 21.12.2013 Unterschrift